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JOHN 13:21-38

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Lord, we ask that your Holy Spirit would fall down on this place today and that our hearts would be so touched by your word that we're changed. We ask where it's necessary, Father, you would convict us of sin and that your Holy Spirit would just point His finger or put His finger on an area of our life that needs changing. Where we need encouragement and we need hope, we ask that you would use the Holy Spirit in our lives to encourage us in that way. We thank you for the power that you provide to us to do the impossible things that you've called us to do. So we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit now and ask that you would illumine your word and teach us from it so that we could be fulfilling the calling that you've asked each one of us to do. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

If we open the Bible, we see a number of different things. I just want to draw your attention to two promises and commands just for a moment. Because I'm convinced that as we look at the promises of God then one of the things that comes from that is we have hope. So if you're lacking hope today, you want to do just kind of a study on the promises of God and what He has for you. Those promises are designed to provide hope for us.

And then there are the commands. I think some people misunderstand the commands. Some people think of the commands as these kind of legalistic rules. But the commands of God are really the secret to enjoying the fulfilled life that God wants for us. Those are His commands. If we do the things that He commands, then hidden within the commands are the secret ingredients we need in order to experience the fullness of God. So we want to know what those commands are. So when we see the command – *Honor one another above yourselves* – this idea of honor is one of those things that contains success principles for us. And if we develop that in our lives, then God uses that and provides for us this fullness of the Christian life that He calls us and offers to us.

Well today we come to the word *command* in our passage when Jesus says – *A new command I give you*. So my ears perk up because here's an opportunity for me to gain some more fullness in my Christian life. Here's something that I can do that will help me to know God in a better way.

So we're in John 13. If you look at the passage from John 13:21-22 all the way to the end of the passage, you're going to see that right in the middle is this part about the new command to love one another. That's where I want to spend some time. That's like the meat of the sandwich today where I want to spend some time. I think that's what we're going to walk away with today that God wants us to understand this new commandment and love one another. Okay? That's where we are.

But it's interesting to me that the passage of scripture about loving one another comes right in the middle of two difficult people. I like that about God's word because sometimes we might think that God's word is about these heavenly principles that don't have any earthly meaning, but they are very relevant to our lives. So here Jesus is saying to them, "You want to understand this new commandment I'm giving you," but in the midst of that He has to deal with Judas and He has to deal with Peter. Two rather challenging people in this upper room at the moment. We're in the Upper Room Discourse in John 13-17.

As we start today, I want to read to you just the meat part and then I'll refer back to the other parts of the story. So would you stand with me as we read John 13:31-35.

When he was gone (referring to Judas – so I want you to see he is gone and the point that he was gone is made here), 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: 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."

You may be seated. Let's take this apart first. We'll come back and talk about the whole passage in a moment as we continue on this morning, but I just want you to see some of the words that are here. When I first see that, I see the word *new* and I'm a little confused by that at first. I was actually pondering it this week. What does the word *new* mean? Because love isn't new.

Do you remember in the Old Testament, every Jew knew the Shema. The Shema prayer is in Deuteronomy 6, but every Jew would say this regularly. It's was kind of their rope prayer that they would say or their rope commitment. *Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one. Love your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.* So the Shema is this idea about loving God with your whole being. So the idea of love is not new.

Even loving your neighbor as yourself isn't new. That's in Leviticus 19:18. And that's recorded there. And you remember Jesus when He was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He said, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself."* So all of that has already happened.

But now He's saying there's a new command that has to do with this subject. I want to know what that is. I want to understand that. Now there seems to be two things about this command that are mentioned in the passage that make this new or make this more significant for us. One is that *love one another*. So there's this *one another* of the passage that draws our attention to the relationships that we have. There's something about loving others, loving one another that Jesus is communicating to His disciples here that's pretty significant. He wants them to know that.

This is really important because, as you can see, *everyone will know that you are my disciples* if you have good theology, or if you can argue your faith, or if you have fancy programs, or if you have a building that looks really attractive. It doesn't say that. How are people going to be attracted to this faith? It's they're going to see something supernatural going on in here that seems out of the ordinary. Well there's a lot of people who love each other, but what He's saying

is you guys are going to love each other in a way that's really big and other people are going to be attracted to that. They're going to know you're disciples by this love. So there's something new about this that makes it pretty significant.

Do you remember on the Sermon on the Mount? We're referring to that because this is John 13-17 is the Upper Room Discourse. It's the teaching that Jesus gives to His disciples in a big section. There's also another big teaching and that's on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Do you remember on the Sermon on the Mount He said things like – *You heard that it was said... But I tell you.* He does that over and over again. "*You heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you anyone who lusts after a woman in his heart has committed adultery already.*" So Jesus is creating some new or saying some new things about the kingdom that we need to hear. So He's communicating that idea.

One of the things He said is – "*You heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemies.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*" Now that's a little bit weird for me. Okay? I think about that and I think I'm not quite sure what to do with that. Loving people that are one another, I kind of get that. Loving enemies, that's a little more difficult, I would suggest, challenging. How do you love people who are obnoxious? How do you love people who betray people? Well we're going to be coming to that in the passage. Here's Peter who's denying Christ and Judas who's betraying Christ. And in the midst of this, the meat of this, is this love idea that I need in the realities of my life every day.

Now I don't have enemies. I know some of you have real enemies in your life and some of them are former spouses or something like that and they're just really difficult people. I don't have an enemy like that except the guy who cuts me off on the freeway. You know those kind of enemies that I have thoughts about in those moments. But I would suggest God wants all of us to develop some kind of love that's bigger than we have now.

Notice the second thing that he refers to in the passage here – *as I have loved you.* One of the reasons we sang some songs about Jesus and we will sing some more songs about Jesus after we're done with this teaching is because the songs amplify Jesus and His love and how big that is. *As Jesus loved you.* I go wow. That's pretty big that Jesus died on the cross for us and that God sent His Son for us. When we start pondering that love, it starts to expand us in ways that we didn't have before. So Jesus is saying this is really important. I want you to get this idea that you are to love one another.

So if we walk away from this passage today, I trust that you're going to walk away from this idea that we all need to follow this command, expand this idea of love more in our lives so that this week you're going to practice loving more. But in order to illustrate that and actually practice it, I really like it that it's sandwiched between these two difficult people. So I want to take you to those difficult people and try to understand them a little bit more and we're going to see what's going on. So we're going to go back in the passage now to Judas.

Remember just before in the beginning of the passage, Jesus has washed the disciples' feet. He made some statements and then He says this: *After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified.* Jesus was troubled in His spirit. Now Jesus is love. Jesus is going to be loving sacrificially. I want to point out here that even though Jesus is very loving, He's still troubled in His spirit. I don't want to suggest that the godly love that we have and the love that expands

inside of our heart for someone doesn't mean that we aren't in pain about some of the things that are going on sometimes. Troubled in spirit. He was upset. The idea is that He was stirred up. Boy, putting this all together is going to be a challenge. We need the Holy Spirit and the power of God to help us know how we're going to be troubled in spirit and still love someone at the same time.

Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me." His disciples stared at one another. Just pause. Let's take this nice and slow. Imagine they're sitting around there. Give it some time. Staring requires a little bit of time. They're not glancing at each other. They're looking at each other, they're staring. I wonder who it is? You know, they're looking at each other, they're staring at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved (that's going to be John, the author of the book the gospel of John), was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned 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, the son of Simon Iscariot. He dips it in the sop, the spices, dips the bread in there and hands it to Judas, an act of friendship. He even calls Judas a friend in the same story in the gospel of Matthew. Friend. So He hands him this and in the midst of this act of friendship, notice what happens. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

That's really scary for me to imagine that happening to a person. If we were to go back in the passage, if you were to look in your Bible at verse 2 it says that Satan *prompted Judas*. Now we're in verse 27; now it says *Satan entered Judas*. To me that's scary. Frankly it's just scary. Now I know that the Bible says *greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world*. So Satan only has certain amount of influence on me and only the amount that I allow. If I'm obedient to God and I'm doing the right thing and obeying His command, Satan has no in into my life. But if I move out of the protection of His obedience into something that I'm being disobedient, Satan then can attack me. That's scary enough for me to obey the commands of God. Not only the blessings that come from being here, but I don't want to be in any way associated with Satan.

In fact it gets really personal when Paul describes that. *Don't let the sun go down on your anger and don't give the devil a foothold*. Whoa. So are you saying even if I go to bed with anger in my heart, I'm opening myself up to Satan's destructive powers? That's what Paul is saying in Ephesians 4.

So here we have Judas. I would consider Judas a wicked person. I'm just going to say that. I think he's wicked and I'm going to show you some examples from the book of Proverbs about this kind of a person. But let me finish reading this. *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.*

Now I'm going to show you part of a study that I've done on the book of Proverbs. I know this seems out of context a moment, but I want you to see this because it helps me put the Judas in context. I've identified seven characters in the book of Proverbs.

Of course the highest character, the most important one, is the wise person. And we all in the book of Proverbs want to become wise. So there's a lot of guidelines about wisdom and how to become wise. There are two others on the positive side. There's the person who's discerning and then there's the person who's understanding. So the understanding person, the discerning person, and the wise person. That's going up the scale.

But in the middle we have the simple person. The simple person is the person who wanders into sin. They don't realize where they're going, they get struck in ways that they didn't see it coming at all. This is the naive person. A lot of young people I find are simple. They think they know what they're doing, but they find themselves in some problems. So the simple person.

Then the next worse person is the person who's the fool. This is the person who plays with sin. The simple person goes into a party and he doesn't realize it, but the punch which smells a little different is actually spiked. So he actually experiences something that he didn't know he was going to experience. The fool is the person who plays with sin. "You've got some pills there? I'd like some of those pills." He plays with sin.

The mocker laughs at sin. "Now they're not going to catch us. We can get away with this." And the wicked person promotes sin. We see this all throughout the book of Proverbs that the wicked person is the drug dealer trying to get other people hooked on the drugs. The person who's promoting the sin, the person who's actively engaged in betraying Jesus. That's why I say that Judas is entering into this wicked position in His life.

I know that you are in contact with wicked people. They are right around you. You may not call them wicked, but they really are. Okay? I want to suggest as we go back to the passage, notice what Jesus does with the person who's this really difficult person who's wicked. I'm sure He loves Judas. But He does a couple things that I think are important to know.

One is He separates Himself from him. *Whatever you're going to do, do quickly.* In other words, I want you to get out of here. Because in the next verse you see when he had gone, Jesus then talks about these special things with His disciples. He separates Himself from this person. So I think there's a time when we actually can be loving to people, but at the same time we set boundaries on what's going to happen in that situation. Just keep that in mind as you watch Jesus in action, someone who's very loving, but He separates Judas before He reveals more about Himself.

And this vulnerability that Jesus does, He does it without the wicked person around. I think we have to be careful about being too vulnerable with wicked people because sometimes they'll turn around and hurt us with whatever we share. Now I want to say this in the context of love because we see in the middle of this Jesus is talking about love. He's explaining this. And Jesus was very loving. So in the midst of love, we have this difficult person, Judas, that Jesus is relating to. Just because we have wicked people out there, doesn't mean that it excuses us from love. We still want to be loving. But loving isn't just this milquetoast kind of experience. It isn't just a feeling. It's a commitment that we have that God wants to expand inside of our hearts that we want to

know that the people that we're facing, they may be really challenged people, but even love those people.

Well let's go to the third part. That is we go after the love part into the third part of the story where we talk about Simon Peter. I would not say that Simon Peter is wicked. I would say He is the simple guy. He has no idea what's going on here. He believes that He is going to be able to get through this and not deny Jesus, but He doesn't know, He doesn't realize. He's the simple guy. There's a little simpleness in every one of us, like there's a little Judas I think in every one of us that we need to be careful of. But when the simple person, the naive person thinks they know something and they don't, that's when they find themselves destroyed or find themselves in trouble or making some grave error in their life.

Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?"

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!"

I think it's important for us to know who the simple person is. It's just a reminder inside of our own hearts to be careful about being that simple person. So I'm going to take a moment and I want to share with you who this simple person is and I want to take you into a passage in the Old Testament in Proverbs 7. I love to read this passage to young people so they get it. Because a lot of times young people don't realize that they're simple, but they are and they can easily get themselves into trouble. Listen to this story from Proverbs 7.

At the window of my house I looked down through the lattice. I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense. He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in. Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. A prostitute is a wicked person who's promoting evil.

Notice, by the way, young people, what characterizes someone who's wicked. *(She is unruly and defiant, her feet never stay at home; now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks.) She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: "Today I fulfilled my vows, and I have food from my fellowship offering at home. So I came out to meet you; I looked for you and have found you! I have covered my bed with colored linens from Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.* You see, the wicked person promotes sin. And they promote sin in such a way that it is so attractive, that you think, "This has got to be good. This has got to be something God has provided for me. This is something very pleasant." A salesman.

Come, let's drink deeply of love till morning; let's enjoy ourselves with love! My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon." You see, a salesman is going to sell something. They tell you how great it's going to be and then they deal with your objections. What if I get caught? Who else will find us? The simple person is gullible, easily sucked into the wickedness of sin.

Verse 21 – *With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. And notice what happens to the simple person. All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life.*

Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say. Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths. Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.

The simple person is in real danger. And you know a simple person because they can't see it. They don't recognize it. They don't know that they're in trouble. They're easily sucked in. It's bad.

Well let's take that back into our story with Peter because Peter is like that, it seems to me. He's this simple person: "I've got it! I'll never fail you, Jesus." Well we know in just a few hours he's going to deny Christ three times. He's going to lie. Bad words are going to come out of his mouth. Things that he doesn't even imagine now because he's in this place where he's simple.

Now I want you to see here that love, the great love of God, this new commandment of loving one another isn't something that ignores sin, that ignores danger in a person's life. We don't just say, "Oh it's okay. We just love each other and we love everybody. If people have different opinions than us, we just tolerate them, and so everybody is fine." We don't have that approach. Jesus doesn't have that approach with Peter. Peter is in danger. He's wrong. And sometimes the loving thing is to come out and say, "You're in trouble here. You're in danger here." I don't want you to think that love weakens the truth. The truth is very important. But love is something bigger than that, as we're seeing in this passage.

But notice what Jesus does to the guy who is simple. He warns him. He takes the risk of relationship and says, "You're in trouble. You're in danger. Be careful here." That's loving. And Jesus knows that. So He's sharing that with Peter in front of the disciples. He's demonstrating love.

So we have this kind of love sandwich where we have the bread on both sides are these difficult people and we have this teaching of Jesus in the middle where He says – "*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 it is a command. It is something you do. Not something you feel here. It's saying go out and do this. You need to love. You need to take action and do this.

There's sometimes in my life, and I'm sure with you, where you feel like the call to love is greater than my capacity to do it. I believe that what God is saying here is I want to increase your capacity for love. I want you to have a bigger love than you think you're able to do and the solution is to look at how I have loved you. *As I have loved you.* And when we start looking at the love of God and what He's done for us and how He's so opened His heart to us and loved us, our capacity starts to expand for love.

I think there are other things in our hearts besides love. There's the justice. Justice is important to me. When someone violates the justice and they're doing the wrong thing, I get upset about that.

So that's in there mixed in with the love. And then there's my responsibility in life. I have things that I need to do and get done. I know I have these things to do and I have this option over here to care for this person or do something, and so I have obligation or responsibility inside of my heart. And so sometimes the love gets squeezed out and God's saying, 'I'm going to help you. I want you to have a greater capacity for love than you ever realized before. That the capacity for love you're going to experience because I have loved you,' and it's going to be a model for you to be able to expand your ability to love other people. So I do think that God expands our capacity, our ability to produce love when it's hard for us.

But I think this goes beyond this because I know in some of your situations the love that you need, you're not going to find even in your capacity because this is something that's spiritual. That God wants to give you something that is not natural. That it is supernatural, this ability to love somebody that's difficult. To love the unlovely or to love the enemy, to pray for those who persecute you (as Jesus said), that's going to require something supernatural. And that's why the Holy Spirit is described as having fruit. That the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the first one is love. That it's unnatural. It's supernatural. It's a superpower that God gives us.

Yes, I do think He wants to expand our capacity to love, but I also am convinced that He wants to do much more than that. He wants to go beyond our capacity to love through us. And that's what people are going to see. When people see the love that we share together, the love that we enjoy together, they're saying, "You know, there's something I want that I don't have."

Oh people understand love today, but they apply it in different ways. Don't they? In fact let me take you to a passage that describes the end times and notice how many times the word *love* is used here in the passage in 2 Timothy 3:1-4.

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Wow. That's a pretty strong statement about our culture and about our world. Which makes the light of Jesus Christ shine so much brighter because we have something that's supernatural. We have this love of Christ that He wants to expand our capacity, but He wants to go beyond that. So it's a command. You want to grow in this? Then you obey the command and you exercise the love. You practice love and God starts to do something in your heart to increase its ability to love more.

Well the story has Jesus, Peter, and John in the story in that section of scripture that we read today. You kind of wonder what happens to these guys over time. Well we know what happens to Judas. That Satan is trying to destroy and Judas gets on this path of self-destruction. We know what happens to him.

What about Peter? Well we have some stories about Peter, certainly, and the things that he's learning. But Peter wrote a book of the Bible, two of them actually, 1 and 2 Peter. And here's what Peter says. He's got it. He gets the message somehow in the midst of all of this. He goes through his challenges and at the end of the resurrection do you remember what Jesus says to Peter at the side of the Sea of Galilee to reinstate him? He says, "Feed my sheep, tend my

lamb.” Do you remember what His question is? Three times He says to Peter, “*Peter, do you love me?*” Do you love me, Peter? I think what He’s saying is, “Peter, do you get it? Are you getting this with me?” And I think Peter does get it and he goes on to do these amazing things as a servant of God. And he writes in his book – *Now that you have been purified yourself by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.* I think Peter had a real understanding of the capacity of love. That he’s experienced something amazing from God. And he knew some things about love that were very personal. In fact he’s the one who says – *Above all, love each other deeply, because (and he knows personally) love covers over a multitude of sins.*

The other character in our story is John who also wrote five books of the Bible. 1, 2, 3 John are three of them. He writes in 1 John 4:19 – *We love because he first loved us.* So if you’re having trouble in this love department and you’re coming to a roadblock because there’s something that just seems too big to love, then we need to go back and recognize that God loved us so much that He increased our capacity. Even that is not enough. We need the supernatural love that God wants us to have so that we can turn around and practice this command, this new command that He shares with us that opens up a whole new fulfillment in life. A fullness of the Christian life happens when we practice this command to love one another.

Let’s stand together and pray.

[PRAYER] Lord, we all have love needs in our lives and try to have those met in certain ways. We do thank you so much for the people in our lives. We have mates, we have children, we have parents. We have our family in Christ, brothers and sisters together, that help us with those love needs that we have. But Lord, we know that there's ultimately one person that we need to get to know and that's you. So Lord, teach us more about what that love is and help us to experience in our own hearts so we can share with broken people, hurting people. Share with one another the love that you've given to us. So we ask for your Spirit to just fall down on this place now and provoke us to love each other and to love others. In Jesus' name, amen.