

John: The Word Became Flesh - John 13:31-38

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[0 : 00] This morning we're going to read today's passage out of John 13. It will be in verses 31 through 38. So if you'll read along with me. When he had gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, Where I am going, you cannot come.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him, where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward. Peter said to him, Lord, why can I not follow you now?

I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered, will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.

[1 : 17] Well, thank you, Rob, for reading God's word this morning. And I don't know about you, but if we could just go home after the children, it would have been worth coming.

Thank you for those who disciple children. It is a common measurement, I'm not saying appropriate, but it's common, to measure ourselves against earthly examples to understand how we're doing.

For example, if I say, well, I wonder if I dress nicely. All I have to do is compare myself with those around and say, hmm, I wonder if I'm dressing nicely. Do I work hard? And so we consider those of our colleagues at work and we think, oh, am I working hard?

And how am I comparing with other those around me? Do I pursue the Lord even? And how do I measure myself against those around me?

Do I use language that speaks life into others? And I think, well, how do those around me use their words to speak life into others? Again, I'm not saying that's the appropriate measurement to use one another as the appropriate measurement, but it is common.

[2 : 30] And today we're going to ask the question, do I love one another well? And what I love about our passage today is we'll find that our measurement of whether we love one another is not each other.

It is the Lord. So the key verse in our text today will be verse 34, a new commandment I give to you, that you have love for one another.

And here's the measurement. Just as I have loved you, the standard by which we measure ourselves is Christ's love for us. That is the measurement by which we have to measure whether we are loving one another.

And so we find today that this new commandment that Christ has given, that Jesus is our standard. And he is also our means by which we can love.

And he is our enablement or empowerment by which we love. And so the big idea today is the cross of Christ is fundamentally what changes everything for us, especially for how we love for one another, especially for our love for one another.

[3 : 43] So again, if you have your text, a Bible with you, turn to Matthew or John chapter 13, rather, we're going to be looking at verse 31 to begin.

And we're going to, in these first two verses, we're going to see how the cross of Christ changes everything. Look with me in the verse 31. When he had gone out, Jesus said, now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in him.

If God is glorified in, God will also glorify him in himself and glorify him at once. Notice there are five glories, glorified, glorified, glorified, glorified, and then glorified.

Five times a derivative of that word is used speaking of Christ's death. This is why the cross changes everything and gives us a standard by which we love.

Let's remind ourselves what the disciples had been doing for the last three years. They had followed Christ every day. They were attended to and led by and provided by and instructed by, taught by, and were, and Jesus was the example to these disciples who had followed him for three years.

[4 : 58] And yet the passage begins with the word that Jesus spoke in verse 31. Now is the Son of man glorified. Now points us back to a preceding event.

What just preceded this text that we looked at last week, namely, that the disciples were enjoying the Last Supper together. And in that Last Supper, only John heard who it is that would betray him. They learned that they would betray someone in the room. One of the 12 disciples would betray Jesus. And imagine being John how that would alarm you. And only John knew who it was because Jesus said, who's going to betray you?

Well, it's the one who I am going to dip the bread and wine and hand it to. And Jesus dips the bread and wine and hands it to Judas. And that is the one who would betray him.

But only John heard this. Imagine John then at the end of that meal together, Judas stands up and leaves the room.

[5 : 55] It says in verse 30, so after receiving the morsel of bread immediately, he went out and it was night and he went out to betray Jesus. So now you're John, you know who's going to betray you.

This is the man you left everything to follow for three years. And it is in that context that Jesus says, now the Son of Man is to be glorified and he's speaking of his death.

And we think, why is he not just speaking plainly of saying, and now is the time for me to die? Why does he not just do that? Well, he is doing something very unique.

He is, he places glorification, if you will, or his glory when he's going to be glorified in its context.

For example, if you came into the kitchen and you said, hey Scott, what are you doing? And I said, oh, I'm just taking a whisk and in a circular motion, mixing the flour, eggs and water and other ingredients, namely oatmeal and raisins.

[7 : 06] And so is that what you're really asking? No, I would say I'm making cookies and it would put in context what I'm doing and why I'm doing it.

And so Jesus doesn't say, I'm going to die. My death is imminent. He says, I'm about to be glorified and he's speaking of his death so that we understand when we see his death, it's in the context of him being glorified.

So he speaks of his death in this way of being glorified. One aspect of God's glory here is the visible manifestation on the cross of his excellent character.

Nobody else could die for sin. It was the beautiful revelation of his excellent character, the perfect sacrifice. Second, what other aspect is there of glorification?

Is that it means to fall short of God's excellent reputation. For all of sin and fall short of the glory of God, is how Romans 3.23. So what is that we fall short of the glory of God?

[8 : 12] That we fall short of God's excellent reputation and moral purity, the weight of his moral perfections, if you will. So Jesus is informing his disciples, when you see me lifted up, when you see me glorified on the cross, you will see the manifestation of God's excellent moral purity.

And you will also see his work, that he is dying on the cross a death for sin. So God's sovereignty chooses the shame of the cross as the greatest moment and display of his glory.

There is no better place to understand who God is than the cross. There is no better place to see that Jesus is worthy of all honor and glory than the cross.

And the cross is the highest moment of God's revelation to mankind. In the cross we learn about God's excellence than any other moment in history.

And in his death we see God's holiness and his love. We see his righteousness and his mercy. We see his justice and his grace.

[9 : 22] We see his sovereignty and his humility. We see his wisdom and we see his patience. So on the cross, the disciples will and we looking back witness the revelation of Christ's excellent character.

The one who in all of his moral perfections and moral purity will die. And so he speaks of his death in terms of glorification. So you understand when you see his death, it is for his glory.

He will be glorified. I will also say this. Have you ever noticed here at fourth?

It is why we often, why we almost exclusively almost, we speak of God, we sing of God in his fullness than is one in essence, three in person.

We speak of his trinity. We speak sometimes we sing of the Father, but I will say we exclusively sing and praise Jesus.

[10:31] And we sing and when we listen to our songs, we sing of what Christ has done on the cross. We sing and speak of his glory.

Every human on earth is a worshiper. We all worship something or someone every day.

But only God merits undying allegiance and unqualified praise. Perhaps today you feel like your relationship with the Lord is drawing cold and I encourage you to consider the cross.

God will never seem distant when we are standing on the hill where the Son of God was sacrificed in our place. So consider that. Thank the Lord.

And true passionate worship springs from our heart that has been gripped by the grace of God that has been displayed on the cross for your behalf, on your behalf.

[11:31] And the cross is not just the starting line that we quickly leave behind. The cross is the grand central station of every part of our life that runs in and through it all the time.

When Paul with Paul, we may resolve to know Christ and him crucified. And that's it. And I pray that that would be our hearts cry to know Christ and him crucified.

And this is why in a moment we're going to get to this new command. This new command I give to you that you love one another. But this is why I say, but they can't do that unless they understand what Christ has done on the cross.

And it's and then he's going to use himself as an example and say, as I have loved you, so consider the cross. How did Christ love us on the cross? This is why the cross of Christ changes everything.

And it gives us the model and example of how to love. And so John opens this passage after Judas' betrayal to say, okay, now love, but consider me of what I'm going about to do.

[12:42] Be glorified on the cross. John, have you ever heard a word that someone spoke to you and you never forgot it? This can be both bad.

You're like, I'll never forget what that guy said. Or it can be very positive. And I'm mainly here speaking of that, which is life giving. And someone spoke to you, spoke life into you and you think, I'll never forget that.

I pray you have many examples of that. I believe for John, that moment occurred in the very next words that we see in our passage. In verse 33 opens with little children, yet a little while I am with you and you will seek me and just as I have said to the Jews, so now I say to you where I am going, you cannot come.

Can you imagine John in this place? He knows that someone's going to betray him. He knows it's Judas. Judas just left to go betray him. He knows now that Christ is going to be crucified.

He's speaking of his death and glory. And then he says, and where I'm going, you cannot come. I don't know about you, but if I'm John, I'm thinking, this is very unsettling to me right now.

[13:53] I've given my whole life to follow you and you're now telling me I can't go where you're going. And I say, John remembers the first two words that were spoken to him to bring him comfort.

It's an endearing term, little children. Why do I say that? Nowhere else in the New Testament is this term used in the Greek, little children.

Except one other place. The other place that this is found is in the book of 1 John. So this guy, John, one of the disciples who have become possible, he wrote later epistles, letters to the church and to a church that is being persecuted, a church that has been dispersed, a church that within the Roman Empire is struggling deeply.

And John writes to that church, John is struggling deeply. Christ is going to betray him. Jesus is going to the cross and I can't follow him. That's all that John has heard.

He's struggling, but he remembers little children. And so John writes to that same church that's persecuted, that same church that's hurting, and he uses this endearing term, little children.

[15:07] I pray when we are struggling, when we have adverse times, when we are hurting, we would take the opportunities to speak life into others.

May we do that all the time. Perhaps someone may not forget what you just said in that moment. Take the time to use your tongue to speak life to others.

John never forgot it. The only other time this term is used is in the book of 1 John and John uses it six more times in that letter to the deheriting and discouraged church.

Secondly, so what do we see there in verse 33 that the love of Christ is a very caring love?

Secondly, it's a very costly love looking with me at this new command.

This new command I give you, that you love one another just as I have loved you. You also are to love one another. Now this is not necessarily a new command.

[16:08] We find in Leviticus 19 verse 18, we find this very command to love one another. So why is it that Jesus says, hey, I give you this new command.

What is new about this command? The new attribute about this command is this, is in the manner in which you are to love, as I have loved you.

That's the new part. And you think, well, how did Christ love us? Look to the cross. That's why he began with the Son of Man is about to be glorified.

So we're going to look at different aspects of how did Christ love us that should be the manner in which we ought to love one another.

And by the way, this is just an aside. Commands don't really care about feelings. If you're a drill sergeant and you say, drop down and give me 20 push-ups, that soldier is not likely going to say, well, you know, I called my girlfriend last night and she just broke up with me and I'm just not feeling it.

[17:26] That's probably going to make matters much worse for you in that moment. And so Jesus is commanding us this. Doesn't really care about your feelings, whether you're feeling like loving one another or not.

Rules and it's amazing in our current culture how much we care about our feelings. We have rules and policies and safe spaces and departments that are filled to make sure people feel okay.

Social media writes something on social media and that someone disagrees with and you will hear about it and people are a little touchy about their feelings.

But Jesus says here, this is a new command I give you. And Jesus, when the father come in John 10, 18, I want us to listen to how the father spoke to the son Jesus and commanding him to die for sin.

Listen to this, John 10, 18. No one, Jesus speaking of his own life, no one takes my life from me. I lay it down on my accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have the authority to take it up.

[18:45] This command I received from the father, it's the same Greek word. The command that I received from the father to lay my life down to be glorified and cross to die for sin. The father told me and I joyfully did that.

And so may we be a people who we receive this new command and not begrudge having to love one another, that we would joyfully love to obey the Lord and loving one another and he set an example of joyful obedience to a command that he'd received from his father.

I am grateful for the phrase, how is it that we are to love one another? As I have loved you. I don't like rules.

Okay, I'm a recovering legalist. I've shared that with you in the past. And so I used to be, I used to live my life governed by rules and I don't like rules outside of a context.

So let me give you an example. Let's assume you're heading to Seattle and you're between Sprague and Ritzville, kind of the garden spot of Washington State.

[20:05] And you're out there and the speed limit on I-90 is 70 miles an hour and then you see a sign out of nowhere that just says, new speed limit 20 miles an hour.

No rhyme or reason, just now 20 miles an hour. There's no construction. There's no wildlife crossing the highway. There's nothing out there.

And I lived out there. I know. So that's a rule outside of a context.

But if you see by a school zone, hey, flashing lights, 20 miles an hour, you understand the context. Oh, there's children here. I better slow down.

I get the context. I get this rule because it's in the context of something. And it helps me better appreciate the rule as to why the rule is there. And I got a ticket to illustrate otherwise in the school zone.

[21 : 09] So I appreciate those rules when they're in context. And so here's the context as I have loved you.

What is context provides meaning as to why the rule is there? I give you this new command, love one another as I have loved you.

So the command to love one another has no meaning apart from its context. And the presupposition is as I have loved you.

Why do I have to love the one who has hurt me? The one who has caused me harm? Why do I have to love the one who is difficult? Why do I have to love the one who stirs up disunity?

Why do I have to love the one who gossips? Why do I have to love the one who I think, frankly, makes poor decisions? Why do I have to love the one who passes by me as if I am no one?

[22 : 16] Why do I have to love the one in the church who I have nothing in common with? Why do I have to love the one who is on a different side of the political aisle in the church?

Why? What's our answer? As he has loved us and we have to look at the cross because such were some of us.

The ones who are difficult, he died for the difficult. The ones who stir up disunity. The ones who gossip. The ones who cause us harm.

Think about the harm that we've caused Christ. So he says, this is a new command that we are to joyfully, lovingly enjoy, obeying, that you love one another as I have loved you.

So why do we have to love those individuals that are difficult? This is why we look to the cross. It changes everything and it gives us our standard.

[23 : 25] And such were some of us. Such were all of us. So what are some aspects of Christ's costly love?

Let's, I would say this first. These are, I'm just going to highlight two aspects of Christ's love, but there are many. One is that Christ's love is proactive.

It's costly and it's proactive. Romans 5.8 says this, but God shows us love in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. We're looking at the cross and while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5.8 says, so human history is marked by humanity walking further and further away from the Lord. And it began in the garden, continues to this day, and we still, and we were sinners and Christ died.

Christ takes the initiative of the relationship with humanity. We were dead in our sins. If God was to wait until we made a first step to the Lord to forgive us of our sin, we would never take this step.

[24 : 41] We're dead in sin. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He takes the first step. He initiates. So what should our love do? It initiates. We're not waiting for each other to say, if you love me, I might return some love.

Love does not do that. We look to the cross. While we were sinners, Christ died. Love is initiating love and that's why it's costly. Secondly, it's costly.

Because we fall into a pattern that secretly tests each other. If my spouse were to give me a little love, then I would love and return.

If only he or she would, then I would return. Relate that to Christ, though.

Waiting for us to love him, we would never. And he initiated. He initiated. He washed all of the disciples' feet, including Judas.

[25 : 59] Am I going to have a proactive love, whether someone reciprocates it or not? And keep going and keep loving and keep loving and keep loving.

It's proactive and it's persistent. Is there someone in my life? Well, there's someone in my life, let me say it this way, that I perceive is like this.

That I receive an email or text probably once a month. And the manner of the text is that I am disappointing this person. This person does not attend fourth.

I'm disappointing this person because I'm not loving this person enough. And it's just the general flavor. I'm disappointing this person often.

And I don't like it that that is the person's perspective. And yet, all too often, all of us are like that with someone. We wait for them to show me a little love and I'm disappointed you for not.

[27 : 08] And if you do, then I will. I pray we would stop any of that kind of behavior. Do you withhold love from someone until they make the first move?

Do you secretly test each other waiting to respond to their initiating love? Christ's costly love was initiative, initiating and proactive love.

I am I was grateful to be visiting with a young lady in the church who was feeling a bit of lack of community. And instead of secretly testing other people to see if they would love her and invite her and engage her, she is looking to invite others, share a meal with others, have coffee with others, initiate loving others.

That she would become that which she is looking for, for others. I pray all of us would take an example, that as an example.

Let me also say that Christ's love forgives completely. In Matthew 18, there's a parable about a king who came and there was someone who had owed him 10,000 talents, which means in today's currency millions and millions and millions of dollars.

[28 : 36] He begged and so the master said, hey, I'm going to sell your kids and wife and throw you in prison and be done with you. And the man pleaded with him, please don't do that.

Forgive me. And so the master then forgives this man, this servant of the master. But then the master learns that that guy who he just forgave millions won't give for he learns that that guy had a servant as well.

And he owned a third of the year's wages, only a third of the year, not millions and millions, but just a paltry amount compared to what he had owed. And he did not forgive this person and he beat him, put him in prison.

And so then the master hears what he did to one of his servants. And this is what it says in the parable. Then the master summoned him and said, you wicked servant, I gave you all, I forgave you all of the debt because you pleaded with me.

And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you. And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all of his debt.

[29 : 43] And then it says this, then we understand the purpose of the parable with the last line. And so my heavenly father will do to any one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

Oh, Christ love forgives completely.

Jesus has forgiven us a debt that is impossible to pay. The Lord had pity on us for giving us of our debt of sin and forgave us.

And yet somehow we want our pound of flesh to those who have harmed us and wronged us in some way. We want to retaliate. And I plead with you to consider the cross of the costly nature of love because he forgave completely.

He did not retaliate against us because we were in sin, but rather paid the price for your sin. And mine.

[30 : 58] So a new commandment I give you that you will love one another just as I have loved you. So you also are to love one another. And then I'll conclude with this thought.

It is also a conspicuous love, this love that we're to have with one another that is compassionate and caring little children. This costly love as I have loved you when we consider the cross.

It's also a conspicuous love because in John 13:35 it says, By this, the way that we love one another, by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

I worked for a woman when I first came to Spokane after I graduated from WSU. And she saw on my resume that I was volunteering my time and working at the church.

And I needed a part-time job to enable me that had a flexible schedule so I could commit myself to the church. And so she saw on my resume that I was working for this church and she said, So are you a Christian?

[32 : 16] By the way, I don't think you can ask that question in an interview, but that's beside the point. Which I joyfully though said yes, yes I am. And she said, Oh, and I said, Have you had bad experiences with Christians working for you?

And she said yes. And I said, I said, I'm sorry for that. And I said, I pray if you were to hire me, I would work hardily unto the Lord and I would honor you as my employer.

She took a chance at me and she hired me. She was not a believer and she said, If all Christians had your work ethic, I would hire more.

Do you have any recommendations when I was stepping down after three years? And but here's that was not meant to. Anyway, here's my point with that story.

It was my work ethic that demonstrated to her what a Christian is like and what I thought of Christ. The world is watching you work with them, your roommates with them.

[33 : 33] You have family and friends who do not know the Lord and they are watching to know you claim to know Christ. But do you love one another? And it's this love for one another, the body of Christ that testifies to the what you declare to be true.

I know the Lord that gives evidence that you do. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

All people will have good evidence that you are born again. You know the Lord. You are a child of God and are a light and no longer in darkness by your love for one another.

People will truly know that you are a disciple, whether you have been given a new heart and trust in Christ and have love for his people.

John Ortberg wrote a book entitled, I would like you more if you are more like me is the title. And all too common that is how often the world loves.

[34 : 47] I love you if you are like me, if you have common interests and things like this. But Christ's love is supernatural. In Galatians we read that in Christ we are neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female.

But all are one in Christ Jesus. If you watch the world how they are trying to unify us. And yet they are making more distinctions that don't even need to be there.

And the church is the one place when you are young and old, varying skin colors, married, single, ethnicity, socio-economic. You can span the political spectrum, various interests and hobbies, various mental, emotional and physical capacities.

Those who are sick and those who are in good health, those who have social aptitude and those who do not. Can have one thing in common and that is our love for the Lord.

And we can love out of our love for Christ and He gave us the example of how we are to love. It's the one place all of those individuals can have unity. We can love one another and demonstrate to the world unity with diversity can happen here.

[36 : 03] I think about and I'll conclude with this thought. Do you realize how hard it would have been for Peter and Matthew to be disciples together?

Simon Peter. Simon is also often called Simon the zealot. Simon the zealot. Let's remind ourselves who the zealots were. Simon Peter was a political group who used intrigue and violence and force and deception to try to achieve the goal of liberating Palestine from Roman rule in the first century. They refused to pay taxes. They attacked and murdered government officials from time to time and they especially hated tax collectors because the tax collectors were fellow Jewish people who would rake in the money from their fellow Jewish people to pay Rome.

Not in the mind of a zealot be any worse than tax collector. And so then Jesus has the audacity to choose Matthew, the tax collector to be his disciple.

And those two are just supposed to just get in the same room and love each other. These men had every right to hate each other, but Christ gave them an example and all we have to do is look at Christ crucified to understand.

[37 : 29] He died for all. He died for sin. And we are to love one another in the church and he sets the example as he has loved us.

And I pray that we would grow and grow in our understanding of that. Let's pray. Father, thank you for this day.

Thank you for the opportunity to look at the beauty of who you are.

Consider the cross and what you have done, dying a death to forgive sin. I pray that we as a church as we look around the room would love one another well.

You set us, you set forth for us an example. Help us to love like you do. We love you Lord and it's in your beautiful name we pray. Amen.