

Gospel of John Study

Session 27

In our last session we saw Jesus celebrate the Passover supper with His disciples, wash His disciples' feet, and anticipate the betrayal by Judas. In the Passover meal, Jesus showed Himself to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. By washing His disciples' feet, Jesus not only showed His disciples that humility was the key to kingdom greatness but also used the term bathing to symbolize salvation and washing to show correction after salvation. During the meal, Jesus, responding to a question by Peter, let Peter and John know that Judas would betray Him. Despite knowing about this betrayal, Jesus honored Judas and showed friendship towards him. Lastly, we saw Jesus send Judas out to actually set the betrayal in motion and by doing so, set the crucifixion in motion as well. This was the beginning of the "hour" John has spoken about on several instances in the gospel so far. It was the "hour" or time that was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth and dying on the cross to atone for the sins of all mankind.

Now with Judas gone, Jesus begins the first part of His farewell discourse to the remaining 11 faithful disciples. In this discourse, Jesus is going to lay down a new commandment then be sidetracked by Peter. We will end this session by seeing Jesus, in typical Jesus fashion, stop His message in order to address the concern of Peter (and the other disciples) and seek to comfort them.

[John 13: 31-35]

It's almost as if with Judas gone, the last barrier to the onset of "the hour" has been removed. With this "hour" in mind, Jesus then shares that now is the time that the Son of Man will be glorified." The departure of Judas puts the actual machinery in motion that will bring about Jesus' arrest and execution. While it was troubling, it was also that act which would ultimately lead to Jesus being glorified. What is interesting is that Jesus' glorification doesn't come in a brilliant flash of light but rather in the course of human existence.

[John 1:14]

We need to do a review at this point concerning the title "Son of Man". It occurs 12 times in the gospel of John and this is the last time Jesus uses it of Himself. Before moving forward with Jesus' discourse, we need to remember what the title "Son of Man" means.

[John 1:51] - This is the first instance of the title "Son of Man" being used in John. Here it refers to Jesus as the revealer of divine truth. Nathaniel will "see" the heavens opened up due to his faith in the Son of Man.

[John 3:13, John 6:62]

Q: What do these two verses tell us about the Son of Man? (*He has a supernatural origin. He is from heaven.*)

[John 3:14, John 8:28]

Q: What do these two verses reveal to us about the Son of Man? *(That His death will achieve salvation for all mankind. His being lifted up or crucified will bring salvation.)*

[John 5:27]

Q: What does this verse reveal about the Son of Man? *(That He exercises final judgment. He was given this authority by the Father.)*

[John 6:27]

Q: What does this verse tell us about the Son of Man? *(He provides man with spiritual nourishment - that which endures to eternal life.)*

When John uses the term “glorified” in referring to Jesus, it always includes Jesus’ death and resurrection. This is the pinnacle of God’s glory being shown to mankind. Also, John, unlike the other gospel writers, does not use the title “Son of Man” in an apocalyptic sense. Outside the New Testament, in Daniel 7:1 the title was used to show presence with God and His association with God’s glory. To sum up all of these, the title is used for the incarnate Christ who is the representative of humanity before God and the representative of deity before mankind. He is the self-disclosure of God to man and in a true God-orchestrated paradox, the Son of Man’s greatest glory would be shown at the shame, suffering and humility of the cross.

The word “glorify” is used 5 times in the first two verses (31-32) of our text. This word in Greek is used to translate the Hebrew word that means “revelation of God’s splendid activity” or as I like to put it “something that displays the invisible God, visibly”. It also means to exalt or bestow exaltation.

[Isaiah 49:6]

Jesus perfectly revealed the Father to us by His death and this brought glory to the Father. What’s interesting is that some of these verbs are aorist and thus should normally be translated into a past tense but in this case, the outcome is so certain (as God will bring it about and there is no doubt to that fact) that though they are events of the future, so certain is their outcome that they are spoken of as if they had already happened. As John presents this concept of glory here, keep in mind that he presents the death and resurrection as two aspects of the same redemptive event.

Q: Why do you think that the cross then is the ultimate act to bring glory to the Father and Jesus? *(It is the fulfillment of Jesus’ God-given mission to bring salvation. It is also the act that shows that Jesus was fully dependent upon the Father and did the Father’s will above all else. It also vindicated Jesus’ righteousness - by returning from the dead. Nothing and no other act would so reveal God to mankind than the cross and resurrection.)*

The “Himself” in v.32 is speaking of the Father. Jesus being glorified and Him glorifying the Father would happen immediately.

[John 17:1-5]

Christ’s glorified humanity was to be taken up to have fellowship with the Heavenly Father and at that time re-entered the glory He had with His Father before the world began. This glory reveals the Father and Son’s glory as well as the dawning of the God’s kingdom being among men.

In v.33, the phrase “little children” is used by Jesus to show His tender love for His disciples. He is using this to introduce the warning that He is leaving. This greeting shows Jesus’ headship over the family of God. This isn’t the first time Jesus has issued this warning that He is departing and those He was speaking to could not come with Him. However, the tone is very different. Compare John 8:21-22 with John 13:33.

[John 8:21-22]

Q: What are some of the differences between Jesus’ statement in these two passages? *(He did not tell the Jews (Jesus’ opponents) that they would follow Him later. He didn’t tell His disciples that they would die in their sins. As we will soon see, Jesus also promises His disciples that they will not be homeless in the next life.)*

Q: Why do you think that Jesus told His disciples that they could not come where He was going at that time? *(They had kingdom work to do. Jesus was about to wrap up His mission to the planet but their work was just beginning.)*

After announcing His departure from them in the very near future, He then begins to lay out for them His expectations from His disciples while He is away.

Q: What is Jesus’ expectation of His disciples while He is away? *(v. 34 - That they will love one another as He has loved them. Since they cannot come with Him, this is what they are to do in His absence.)*

Jesus calls this commandment of His “new”. It is not new in the sense that it had never been issued before. It had been noted in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. In Mark 12:28-33 Jesus taught that all the Law and Prophets are summed up in this command to love God and others as oneself. Thus is not a recent or different command. It is new in the sense that it is fresh and not worn-out. Jesus knew that His disciple’s spirit of rivalry could disrupt their new fellowship as they sought the highest rank in God’s kingdom. Love would bond them together. What’s interesting is that this commandment is “*simple enough for a toddler to memorize yet it is profound enough that the most mature believers are repeatedly embarrassed at how poorly they comprehend it and put it into practice.*” (D.A. Carson, Gospel According to John, p.484.)

Q: What act earlier in chapter 13 exemplified this type of love? (the foot washing of vv.5-10).

This commandment is new in the sense that it sets a new standard for loving each other - as Jesus showed them. This commandment cannot be met by simply memorizing a Scripture or two or squirming through self-effort to meet the bare minimum requirements of "love". (See the account of the lawyer trying to get out of loving certain people by getting Jesus to define "who is my neighbor?" To this Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10.) Instead this commandment is the new commandment of the new covenant Jesus was just about to inaugurate. This love is meant to reflect the relationship of love that exists between the Father and His Son. In this sense, this love is eternal, without end, sacrificial, kind, merciful, just to give a few characteristics of this love. This love would be the love that would bring the members of the Messianic community into the kind of unity that characterizes the Father and the Son. Now that is a deep love there. This love is not an obligation but rather it demonstrates the life of a member of the new covenant community to the love with which God has loved us and thus it is our privilege to live out in the world as it proclaims the true love of God before a watching world. This love would be the convincing demonstration that the Spirit of God had taken up residence in a person's heart. This love shows our unity with God on His mission to bring salvation to the world. Jesus loved His disciples without reservation and without limit and we are called to do likewise.

Q: What are some threats or hindrances to us loving others as Jesus has loved us?

Q: What are some "essentials" or the foundation to loving each other in this love of Jesus?
(There are many answers but first and foremost, we must know Jesus personally. We cannot love in a way that is foreign to us and have never seen or experienced before. After that, the Spirit must be active and yielded to so that when the opportunity arises to show this love, it gets done in God's way.)

This love does not originate within us. It is wholly the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit in our lives that makes it possible for us to express. We need to keep in mind that as believers, we are all beggars who can do nothing more than point other beggars to where to find this bread.

Q: In practical terms, in what ways does loving fellow Christians bring the lost to salvation?
(The lost see this love and want it in their lives. They want to experience it for themselves. Remember this love is the love the Father and Son have for each other. When the depth of this love is shown, it provokes a response in the lost.)

It is just as Jesus is gearing up in His discourse that Peter interrupts Him with a question. This question shows the concern and anxiety, as well as the devotion of all the disciples.

[John 13:36-38]

Q: What is Peter's question? (v.36 - "Lord, where are You going?")

Peter and the other disciples who are slower to respond than Peter are less concerned about the new commandment than their Master's immanent departure. It appears that to these disciples, knowledge of the Master's plan was more appealing than obedience to a new

commandment. (Just keep in mind it is possible for modern Christians to do likewise. We can beg for answers and knowledge instead of following simple instructions and obeying without hesitation.) Now what we are going to see by Jesus' response and Peter's follow-up is that Peter is not talking about desiring to know a physical location. Peter was asking the question in hopes that Jesus would take him with Him to wherever it was Jesus was going. This shows a great deal of faith and devotion for Jesus, even if it is expressed in a clumsy manner. Jesus' response that they will follow Him later (v.36) lets us know this is what Peter meant by his initial question.

In Jesus' mind, He understands the big picture. Only He can die to pay for the sins of mankind. Only He can glorify the Father perfectly. The others will follow Jesus later and He knows this but the disciples do not. Jesus also understood the weaknesses of the disciples at this time, as seen in Peter's second question of v.37.

Q: What was Peter's claim and what do you think Peter meant by saying it, in this context? (v.37 - *That Peter would lay down his life for Jesus. In other words, he was devoted to Jesus enough to die for Him. This, in his mind, gave him the right to follow Jesus to wherever He had to go.*)

This turns out to be pure irony. Notice Jesus' reply in v.38. "Will you lay down your life for Me?" Here Jesus is about to lay down His life for Peter, the rest of His disciples and all mankind and yet Peter claims that he will die for Jesus?! The problem is not with Peter's devotion to the Lord. The problem is with his confusion over what is happening and his impatience. His boast that he will not deny the Lord displays a gross ignorance of human weakness but it also points out an independent attitude that is the deed of denial itself. Anytime we think we can live the Christian life, a life devoted to Jesus, in the power of our flesh, we are terribly confused and wrong. We are denying that we are to live dependently upon God, as Jesus' life constantly pointed out to us. There are no emotions strong enough to allow us to live the Spirit-filled life. Now to give Peter a little credit here, he did speak better than he knew in that three decades later he would die for his faith in Jesus.

Q: How did Jesus end His response to Peter's bold assertion? (v.38 - *A rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.*)

While we typically see a rooster crowing only at sunrise, it was customary in the ancient world to use the rooster crowing as a signal for what time it was at night. The first rooster crowing was around midnight followed by one around 1:30 AM then one around 3:00 AM. This lets us know that Peter's denials, which are only a few hours away from this time, will be completed by around 3:00 AM. The deal is that Jesus knows our weaknesses that we may not know or refuse to acknowledge exist within us. He knows that time will show these things to us so that we can re-adjust ourselves to living dependently upon Him and not ourselves.

Now Peter's questions have sidetracked Jesus from what He was saying. However, Jesus understood from them the fragile emotional state His disciples were in at that moment and realized that need to comfort them. Jesus now seeks to calm their hearts.

[John 14:1-4]

It's interesting how Jesus seeks to bring a sense of peace to their troubled hearts. Just think back to the last chapter as to all the circumstances that have led the disciples to be troubled in their hearts. (And the word "troubled" here is the same as we've seen describing Jesus' emotional state in earlier chapters - perturbed, angry, agitated, etc.) Jesus has told them that He is leaving them and they cannot follow Him. Jesus told them that one of them was going to betray Him. They, led by Peter, were upset that Jesus would stoop to wash their feet. Now Peter learned he was going to deny knowing Jesus three times before the next morning. They had many reasons to be troubled. Yet, Jesus tells them to not let their hearts be troubled.

This is another example of the strength of Jesus in that the disciples should have been the ones seeking to support Jesus emotionally. He was the One who was going to the cross to die. He was the One who was going to be betrayed and then falsely condemned and cruelly treated. Yet, despite these things, Jesus instead seeks to comfort them. This is a very paternal reaction to the disciples immaturity at this time.

Jesus' words are a command. "Stop being troubled!" or "Set your hearts at ease!" Those capture the force of what Jesus was saying. They are confused and unsettled and on the brink of failure to be able to remain together as a group after Jesus departs.

Q: Jesus' statement in v.1 to not be troubled is a command. What path does Jesus give so that they can follow this command? *(v.1 - You believe in God, also believe in Me. The words "trust" in both instances are commands as well. Jesus urging His disciples to maintain their faith in God and in Himself.)*

Notice that this is another example of Jesus equating Himself with God. This shouldn't be surprising to those of us who have read the earlier chapters of John. Jesus speaks the very words of God and Jesus performs the mighty acts of God. So to hold steadfastly to one's faith in this challenging time was to hold tightly to Jesus as He is the God His disciples could see.

Q: How do we hold tightly to Jesus in the times of our confusion or dismay?

Q: Where does Jesus tell His disciples that He is going? *(v.2 - back to His Father, in heaven)*

"My Father's house" is another way of saying heaven. The words describing the house come to us from the ancient east where a large house with one roof would house the parents and then in various suites or subdivisions within the house, the sons and daughters and their families would live.

Q: What was the purpose of Jesus going to His Father's house? *(v.2 - To prepare a place for them - His disciples)*

Q: What does this presuppose? *(Jesus is expecting that His disciples will be coming to dwell with Him in heaven after their lives.)*

Q: Jesus says He is going to His Father's house. What is the mechanism that will lead to Jesus going to His Father's house? *(His death and resurrection)*

So then the way to get to the Father's house is to die and be raised from the dead. Jesus prepared the path for us when He died and rose again. Heaven is already in existence. It is completed. Only the way was missing at that time. Jesus was yet to die and rise again so to become the way for us to follow Him to His Father's house. Jesus' appearance in heaven after His crucifixion and resurrection made the place for us in heaven so that all who put their faith in Jesus will be there with Him. In this regard, Jesus' departure was to the disciple's advantage.

What is interesting is the way in which Jesus always talks about heaven and the life of eternity. He always spoke of it with calm assurance. He never speculated or guessed about the future. He always spoke with complete certainty about the future as a person speaks of their hometown. This calm and authoritative manner of speaking about the future, which from the disciples' point of view was uncertain and threatening, gave them hope and a spirit of calmness. They only had to keep their trust in Him - as He noted in v.1.

Now put yourself into a situation where the outcome is uncertain and could be threatening to you and/or your family. It's at these times we need to remember Jesus' words in v.1. Believe in God, believe also in Me. Don't let your mind slip into doubt and fear but rather remain fixed upon the One who knows the future with certainty. He's prepared a way for you to get to Him and dwell with Him eternally. That's one of our foundations of hope.

Q: What was the promise Jesus made to His disciples in v.3? *(That He would return and receive them to Himself so that they could be with Him.)*

This is showing us the lengths Jesus will go to comfort His disciples. He is showing a deep personal concern for them, as He does for us. His return is just as certain as His departure. For those who enjoy speaking of end times, notice that Jesus does not speak about the hardships and tribulations of the end times, as in the other gospels. Instead He focuses on the end peace and comfort and joy.

[Revelation 21:1-7]

In v.4 Jesus tells His disciples that they know the way where He is going. They are still confused. This verse answers Peter's question but also shows that the disciples know the way to where Jesus is going because they know Him. In just two verses (which we'll examine next week, we'll see that Jesus tells them He is the way).

[Psalms 23:6]

[John 10:27-28]

Jesus' sheep will follow Him to His Father's house and there at the end of their journey, they will find eternal rest with Him. This is the comfort Jesus sought to give to His disciples on this night of turmoil but also it is the same calmness He seeks to give us in our journey to His Father's house.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes, or rebuttals?