

Theme: The love of Jesus is so wonderful!

We are starting to look at John 13-17 in more detail. We will look at many precious truths John gave us in these chapters - none of these details are given by the other gospel writers. We have so much to be thankful to John for what he wrote down for us. These chapters have been precious to many throughout the centuries and no doubt to many of us in our lives as well, for they give great comfort, encouragement and joy as we read and come to understand the truths they contain. Here in chapter 13 the apostle John begins his account of events there in that upper room, with the incident of the Lord of glory washing the dirty feet of His disciples. In these verses I have noted 3 main points, but today we will just look at just the first:

1. The Marvellous Love. (v1)
2. The Marvellous Action. (v2-11)
3. The Marvellous Obligation. (v12-17)

As we consider this area of **The Marvellous Love** in v1, I will remind us of the overview of chapter 13-17 as I said that v1-3 can be compared to the doorway to the sanctuary and everything that happened that evening have to be viewed through what these verses tell us. In particular, we have to realise that v1 is, as it were, the inscription above the doorway, telling us what is special and significant about that which we will enter into. All that Jesus does and says is linked to, is based upon His love - His undeserved, unearned love. As we come and consider it, I want us to note 3 things about this Marvellous Love of the Lord Jesus. See it is:

1. A Knowing Love.

Jesus and the disciples are in the upper room and in all the events that evening and the next day, Jesus shows the disciples the full extent of His love (NIV) or “*to the last*” as the footnote says. The AV says “*He loved them to the end*”. Here the same Greek words are translated and seem to give different meanings. This is because

in the Greek, the words can be viewed either as an indication of time – meaning “*to the end*”, or as an adverb and so mean “*to the uttermost, utterly, or full extent*”. I suppose we could combine the ideas, as both are allowable, and say that Jesus loved His disciples and showed them the full extent of His love even to the end. It’s quite amazing that as the Lord Jesus went into His last hours, as He shared with them precious truths at the Last Supper, as He went to Gethsemane, was betrayed, crucified that He was showing them the full extent of His love, even to the end of His life.

Yet this Marvellous Love, was a love coupled with knowledge – a knowing love. It is always easier to say you love someone you don’t know that well e.g. assuring missionaries you write to or email to of your love, yet it might be that if we were in the same fellowship together, we would not be able to say the same, for we may have rubbed one another up the wrong way! The Lord Jesus had spent 3 years with these disciples, He knew them through and through. Yet He still loved them to the end, kept on loving them and showing them His love to its fullest extent.

Being honest, there was not that much in these disciples to love. They were a rough and ready lot, mostly uneducated and uncultured on the whole. They did, even there in the upper room, still not appreciate Him or His purpose; they were still full of pride and unwilling to humble themselves. He knew they would shortly deny Him and run away to preserve their own skins.

There was so much in them that tested His love. They had doubts, unbelief - even when He appeared to them after His resurrection. Consider their quarrels, or Peter taking Jesus to one side and giving Him a good telling off at the talk of His death - for it was stuff and nonsense... Jesus knew that in a short while His 3 closest disciples would be asked to watch and pray with Him and yet they’d fall fast asleep, even all of them would abandon Him! Yet knowing them,

their faults and failings, weaknesses and habit of letting Him down, He still showed them the full extent of His love to the end.

Especially note that in His love, He knew of His imminent death. Jesus knew the time, His hour had come to leave this world and go to His Father. This love is shown even as He was on the brink of all His sufferings and the all horrors it would involve. He had loved them, shown that love and now, even as the darkness and sufferings of Calvary were looming and about to break upon Him like an avalanche of white-hot suffering, even knowing all that His death would involve, He showed the full extent of His love to and for them.

A few hours later, in great agony of heart and mind, the Lord Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, as His humanity recoiled from what lay ahead, but here at the start of the evening, He shows His love towards the disciples even though He knew His time at come to depart from the world and go to the Father. Charles Ross says *“Herein is love, not only enduring to the end, but moreover, most wondrously and conspicuously displayed, when, judging by human standard, it was least to be expected. Oh, surpassing love of Jesus, with the fire of justice and the furnace of divine wrath and the sea of His own blood - all, all in vivid array before Him - He yet spends the last moments before His final sufferings in words and deeds of love to His disciples.”*

This is an amazing love, a marvellous love, and it is an informed, constant and knowing love. It is shown in the light of all that was known of His own near future and of the unworthiness of the disciples. This same Lord Jesus knows us through and through, yet He has the same constant love for us.

2. A Distinctive Love.

As Creator of all, God has a love and care for all His creatures, for all people. In His goodness He sends His sun and rain on the

righteous and the unrighteous; He showers blessings of health, family, jobs, prosperity on the righteous and unrighteous. Yet the love we are speaking of here is distinct from the general love, the benevolent love, goodness and care of God.

Here John says Jesus *“loved His own who were in the world”*. The highest angel, the lowest worm, the smallest creature in the sea or a puddle, are God’s own creatures, but when John uses this term here, he does so in a distinctive way. It marks out a part of humanity that are His own in a way that others are not. Simply, it refers to those who have been or will be born-again of God’s Spirit, in other words Christians - those who trust the Lord Jesus as their own Saviour and become God’s adopted children for time and eternity.

The Bible tells us many mysteries and gives us glimpses of them - doing so to cause us to wonder and be amazed. One truth, mystery, most clearly glimpsed is that in eternity past, in the great Council of salvation, redemption, God the Father chose a people to be His; He gave them to the Son who would, in the plan of salvation, die to save them and the Holy Spirit would bring the things of Christ and apply such to their lives, bringing them to salvation, making them God’s children.

These ones would be Christ’s own people; they would be redeemed, bought back, purchased, ransomed by His blood; saved by His grace and would be in a closer relationship to Him than even the greatest archangel. They and they alone would be His own! What a privilege that would be! It is marvellous that Christians are loved by the Lord Jesus as His own!

Yet John went further and said that Jesus *“loved His own who were in the world”*. He was about depart the world and go to His Father and He is aware that these disciples would be remaining in the world. There were many of His own in heaven already, but the ones with

Him would be His own in the world. He has a distinctive love and concern for them. Those in heaven are safe, dressed in glorious robes, able to sing and praise God unhindered by sin, by the world, the flesh and the devil. Yet those left in the world would be going through hard times, in a world that was anti-Christ and anti-them. Jesus was aware of this and prayed for them (17:11) and yet they were the objects of the constant love of the Lord Jesus.

There is a distinct difference between Christ's own and the world in general. Christ's own are drawn out by the chords of love from the world and are the recipients of His saving, transforming, eternal life-giving love. It is these ones and these ones alone who are the objects of the love shown in these chapters. He loved His own to the uttermost, even though they would have pride, arrogance, argue, desert Him, deny Him. Yet He loved His own who in the world to the full extent of His love, even to death and beyond...

3. A Continuing Love.

As I've been speaking on this Marvellous Love of the Lord Jesus, I hope it has not just been a theoretical peek at a verse in John's gospel. This love is a continuing love which can be, is to be known and experienced by people like us in our lives. The moment we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, many wonderful changes happen - born-again, sins forgiven, justified in the legal court of heaven, peace with God; we become Christ's own, adopted as His sons and daughters and at we are recipients of His distinctive love.

If we are Christians, then the Lord Jesus Christ, indeed God the Father and Holy Spirit loves us. It is a love that continues even today. He loved us first before we ever loved Him, by grace we were led to know that everlasting love and trust Him as our Saviour. If He has loved us at the first, He will also continue to love us to the end and to show us the full extent of His love.

It is incredible that the same love which moved the very Son of God to leave heavens glory, to go to the cross of Calvary, that is now the driving force at the centre of heavens attention and praise in Jesus, is the same love which can be ours in the gospel, is truly ours **now** if we believe in Him as our Saviour. It is no lesser, no inferior love that is ours today. Yes, in heaven we will most fully appreciate it, be ravished by it, but it is the same love and we need to ponder it often in our lives. John Kent in his hymn Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding wrote: *“On such love, my soul, still ponder, Love, so great, so rich, so free; Say, while lost in holy wonder, Why, O Lord, such love to me? Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Grace shall reign eternally!”* The apostle Paul wanted the Ephesian believers, all believers to know this love - Ephesians 3:17b-19 *“I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with **all** the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God.”*

Have we any excuse for ignoring, neglecting or not knowing this love? The Lord Jesus is still concerned for us as we are in this world, with our own personal situations, heartaches, problems, dark times and as we face new situations, as our fears, weaknesses and failures haunt us, as we face family, marriage or job problems, as we stand on the brink of the unknown and unprecedented troubles at this time! Yet if we are His child, we are to always remember He passionately loves us while we are in the world - as we are, even with our sinful weaknesses, supposed strengths and struggles.

The Lord Jesus has a tender concern for us who are in the world, especially if we are struggling. What kind of parent would say of their little son or daughter who is ill, that they do not really care for them as they are unwell!? None of us would do that, we would lavish care and love on them, even if we had a dozen other children, for that sickly child would have a special place in our affections. Yet when

we struggle, doubt, fail, limp along as a Christian, then we can so easily feel *“Jesus hasn’t really got time for a weak and pathetic one like me; He’d not bother with me!”* Yet He has a tender care for us in the world as we struggle and glimpse of that in Isaiah 49:15-16 *“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.”*

He loves us to the uttermost and will show us His love continually. Yet sadly, we too easily doubt His love. Did He love us there in the upper room? Yes. Did He love us in Gethsemane? Yes. Did He love us on Calvary? Definitely YES! Did He love us as His grace drew us to Himself in the course of our lives? Well, yes! Do you think He will love us in eternity? Yes? Then why do we think He will stop loving us now if we are His own?

His love cannot be quenched even by many waters, by our blackest times. Our most sinful actions and thoughts cannot stop Him loving us. His love is not exhausted or short-circuited by our actions. It may be, we will not be able to delight in such, but He is still loving us to the end - as Paul says in Romans 8:38-39 *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, **nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”*

Jesus is not a daisy using Saviour - He loves us, He loves us not! He’s not an up-and-down Saviour who loves us today, but tomorrow who knows! He does not change. He loves us as His own who are in the world and He loves us to the end, to the uttermost. This challenges our love for Him; should stir us up to love Him better, to delight and be ravished by His love in our own lives.

Perhaps someone listening doesn't know the love of the Lord Jesus. You may know all about Him, but you have never loved Him in a personal way. Yes, you may be religious, a churchgoer, but have you ever seen the Lord Jesus loved you as an individual and that He died to save you personally there on the cross of Calvary? This love is marvellous and as the children's chorus says - *The love of Jesus is so wonderful, so high you can't get over it, so low you can't get under it, so wide you can't get around it, oh wonderful love!*

It is difficult to put into words, to describe the experience, to express the wonder of this love, but it is marvellous to experience. An old Scotsman said "*It is better felt than told*" – its reality is far better than words can say. My prayer and desire are that we would all - young or old, would come to know the Saviour as our own Saviour and Friend and we would be ravished more and more by His Marvellous Love as our lives go on.