

John 13:1

Introduction

This morning, we come to the beginning of the second half of John. Whereas until now, John's Gospel has been taken up almost exclusively with the public ministry of Jesus, from now until the end of John there will be no more public ministry. Whereas until now, the focus has been on Jesus' interactions with "the Jews" in general, now the exclusive focus will be on Jesus' last words to His twelve disciples before He goes to the cross, and then after His resurrection, on His appearances and last words to Mary and to the twelve before He ascends into heaven. It's this two-part structure of John's Gospel that we're going to see reflected and even summed up here in this first verse of chapter 13:

I. John 13:1 — Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus **knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father**, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

The last time Jesus spoke of His "hour" He spoke of it in terms of being "*glorified*."

- John 12:23, 27–28 — "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified... Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

But now we see this "hour" in a different light and perspective – one that before now we've not seen in John. "Jesus knowing that His *hour* had come that He would *depart out of this world* to the Father..." Why this sudden change of perspective? Why this emphasis now on *departing out of this world*?

"World," in John, is one of those words that's full of meaning and significance. What is the world? "The world... hates Me," Jesus said, "because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil" (Jn. 7:7). The world is the realm of moral and spiritual darkness. "I have come as Light into the world," Jesus said, "so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness" (Jn. 12:46). The world loves its own, Jesus said, but will hate Jesus' disciples (Jn. 15:18-19; 17:14). The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth because it does not see Him or know Him (Jn. 14:17). The ruler of the world is Satan, the devil (Jn. 16:11; cf. 12:31). The disciples will grieve when Jesus is taken from them in death, but the world will rejoice at this apparent triumph of the darkness (Jn. 16:20). In the world, Jesus' disciples will have tribulation, but we should take courage because Jesus has overcome the world (Jn. 16:33). The world, Jesus says, does not know the Father (Jn. 17:25).

Can you see from all these things that there's a sense in which the "world" is, by definition, irredeemable? The "world" refers to the whole of *sinful* mankind in its *active opposition to and rebellion against* God. And yet it's into *this* "world" that Jesus came. On the one hand, we've seen that the world hates Jesus. The world *must* hate Jesus because it's the world. And yet Jesus

came into this very world to *save* the world. What did John the Baptist say when He saw Jesus coming to him?

- John 1:29 — “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

Remember what John the Apostle said in chapter three:

- John 3:16–17 — God *loved* the *world* in this way, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but in order that the world should be saved through Him.”

God loved the very world that hated Him – the world that is ruled by Satan, that loves the darkness, and that does not know Him. Jesus said:

- John 6:51 (cf. 6:33) — “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”
- John 8:12 — “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”
- John 12:47 (cf. 4:42) — “I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.”

But how is it that the world can be saved if, by definition, the world always hates Jesus?—If, by definition, the world always does evil?—If, by definition, the world always rejoices in the darkness and is always ignorant of God? The answer is that Jesus calls a great multitude of people *out of* this world—people from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation—and then shapes this people into a new humanity – a humanity that’s no longer “*of* this world.” In other words, God saves the world not by making the world into something it wasn’t before, but by calling a great multitude of people *out of* the world and giving them life and light and salvation in Jesus Christ. Remember these words from all the way back in chapter one:

- John 1:9–13 — There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Jesus will say to His disciples:

- John 15:19 — “Because you are **not of the world**, but I chose you **out of the world**, because of this **the world hates you.**”

And when Jesus prays, He prays with these words:

- John 17:6, 14 (cf. 17:16) — “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me **out of the world**... I have given them Your word; and **the world has hated them**, because they are **not of the world**, even as I am not of the world.”

Are we beginning to understand now? By definition the world loves the darkness and hates Jesus. It always has and it always will. But Jesus came into the world to save the world (it’s always the world that needs saving) by calling a multitude of people *out of* the world to be His own new creation. And now each one of these realities is recapitulated (expressed and affirmed all over again) in these words that Jesus prayed:

- John 17:15, 18, 21 (cf. 17:23) — “I do not ask You to take them out of the world [in the sense of physically leaving the world], but to keep them from the evil one [the ruler of the world]... As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them *into* the world... so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

Now we should be able to understand what John says here in chapter thirteen in a much richer and deeper way:

II. John 13:1 — Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would *depart out of this world* to the Father, having *loved His own who were in the world*, He *loved them* to the end.

Are you seeing the stark contrast here between “the world” and “His own”? Jesus will pray in John 17:

- John 17:6, 9 — “I have manifested Your name to **the men whom You gave Me out of the world**... I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of **the world**, but of **those whom You have given Me**; for they are Yours.”

Last week we saw Jesus “crying out” to *the world* because of His deep desire that all who heard Him should come to Him in repentance and faith. Now we’re going to see that special and unique *love* that Jesus has for “*His own*.” If in the first half of John the emphasis was on Jesus’ saving mission to **the world**, then here in this second half of John the emphasis is going to be on the love of Jesus for “**His own**” – a love that, as we will see, cannot be compared with any other love.

John doesn’t include any noun for the adjective, “his own,” to modify. He doesn’t say, “His own *disciples*” or “His own *people*” or “His own *sheep*”; he just says, “His own” – or we could even say, “the ones who were His own” (*ho idios*). The adjective is turned into a noun. And so what we have here (especially in this context; cf. 1:11) is not just an expression of ownership, but of the most tender affection and endearment (cf. Moulton; quoted in Morris). We are “His own.” That’s who we are. Remember what Jesus said to the Pharisees in chapter ten:

- John 10:2–4 — He who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls *his own sheep by name* and leads them out.

When he puts forth all *his own*, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they *know his voice*.

In chapter 15, Jesus will tell His disciples that if they were of the world, “the world would love *its own*” (15:19). In that context, the point of “its own” is not ownership—or even the kind of affection that we have here in chapter 13—but rather *identification* and *belonging*. We can see that here, too. When John says that Jesus loved “His own,” he’s speaking of those that Jesus was not ashamed to “own” or claim as being “*with Him*” – as being the ones that He wholly identified Himself with. “I’m with them; and they’re with Me. They’re Mine. And they’re dear to Me. And I love them.” It’s this most tender affection and love of Jesus for the ones who are “His own”—a love that cannot be compared with any other love—that will be revealed to us so wonderfully in this second half of John’s Gospel. Let’s read these words again:

III. John 13:1 — Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them **to the end**.

The phrase that John uses is “*eis telos*” (“to the end”). This is the only place in John’s Gospel that he uses that word, *telos*. “*Telos*” is a “special” word. Occasionally it can refer to an “end” simply as a point in time when something or someone comes to an “end.” This is its *temporal* meaning. Think, “The End.”

- Mark 3:26 (cf. Phil. 3:19) — “If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is [ended; *telos*]!”
- Luke 1:33 — He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end [*telos*].
- Hebrews 7:3 — Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end [*telos*] of life...

But *telos* usually has a fuller and more nuanced meaning than just “The End.” The “end” may be so closely related to what comes before that it’s really the “*result*” or the “*outcome*” of something.

- Matthew 26:58 — Peter... entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the end [of the trial; result/outcome; *telos*].
- Romans 6:21–22 — What benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end [result/outcome; *telos*] of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the end [result/outcome; *telos*], eternal life.
- James 5:11 — You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the end [result/outcome; *telos*] of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.
- 1 Peter 1:9 (cf. 4:17) — ...obtaining as the end [result/outcome; *telos*] of your faith the salvation of your souls.

The “end” may be the “outcome” of what comes before or the “end” may also be the “goal” or the “conclusion” toward which something is moving – the *consummation* of all that has come before.

- 1 Timothy 1:5 — The end [goal; *telos*] of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
- Luke 22:37 — “This which is written must be fulfilled in Me, ‘AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS’; for that which refers to Me has its end [fulfillment; *telos*].”
- 1 Corinthians 10:11 (cf. Mat. 24:14) — Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends [consummation/fullness; *telos*] of the ages have come.
- 1 Corinthians 15:24 — ...then comes the end [consummation; *telos*], when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

When John says, “Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them *to the end*,” what does he mean by “*to the end*”? This isn’t just an academic question. It’s a question that yields an answer full of wonder and joy and delight. Does he mean that Jesus loved them all the way up until the end of His life (the simple “temporal” meaning)? Maybe so, but that’s not saying nearly enough, is it? There are three other words that would have expressed this idea clearly (*heos telos*, 1 Cor. 1:7-8; 2 Cor. 1:13; *achri telos*, Heb. 6:11; Rev. 2:26; *mechri telos*, Heb. 3:14). John doesn’t say “*until* the end”; what he says is “*to* the end,” or even, “*unto* the end.” What is the “end” for Jesus? It’s the “hour” of His “depart[ure] out of this world to the Father.” And *in what way* does Jesus depart out of this world to the Father? He will depart out of this world via the cross, where He will lay down His life for “his own” (cf. 10:3-4, 15)—for those He even calls His “friends” (15:13-15; the context demands an intimate level of friendship [His “dear ones”; *philos*]).

So let’s ask again: What does John mean when He says that “having loved *His own* who were in the world, [Jesus] loved them *to the end*”? He means that Jesus *loved* them *all the way to* the cross. He means that Jesus *loved* them *all the way to* that *goal* for which He had come into the world. He loved them *even to that end*. The love with which He had loved them *from the very beginning* is the very *love* that “carried” Him, *as it were, all the way to the cross*.

So why isn’t John more explicit? Why, when he could have said “even to death” or “even to the cross” does he say, “to the end”? The Greek word for “end” (*telos*) is a noun, and as a noun here in this context it can refer to a specific *goal* and *destination* – namely, Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross. But it would seem that when the noun “*telos*” is paired with the preposition “*eis*” (*to the end*) the phrase can function as an adverb – so that now it’s *describing* the action of the verb (“He *loved* them”). So, for example, Paul says in 1 Thessalonians:

- 1 Thessalonians 2:16 — ...they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has *come upon* them *to the end* [*eis telos*; “Wrath has come upon them *completely—to the uttermost*”].

There are four places in the New Testament where the phrase, “to the end” (*eis telos*), follows the verb (“Wrath has **come upon them to the end**”; “the one who **endures to the end**... will be saved” [Mat. 10:22; 24:13; Mk. 13:13]). There are two places where the phrase, “to the end” (*eis telos*) is placed emphatically before the verb. One of these places is in Luke chapter eighteen:

- Luke 18:5 — “Because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, in order that she may not **to the end** [*eis telos*] **be coming** and wear me out.”

Can you hear the frustration in the voice of this “unrighteous judge”? Why does he put the phrase “to the end” first? Because he’s using it to emphasize how he views her actions (he’s using it adverbially). “I will give this widow legal protection, in order that she may not **constantly** [to the end] **be coming** and wear me out.” Now, can you guess where is the other place that the phrase, “to the end,” is placed emphatically before the noun?

“Having loved the ones who were His own, the ones who were in the world, **to the end** He loved them.” He loved *His own* with a kind of loving that cannot be compared to any other. He loved them to the uttermost. He loved **His own all the way to** the cross. Which is to say, He loved them *utterly and completely*.

IV. John 13:1 — Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

And so we can *know*, today, that He loved us, who are *His own*, *HOW*? “*To the end*” He loved us. When Jesus goes to the cross, He doesn’t go “impersonally” for the whole mass of humanity. He will go to the cross with the individual *names* (cf. Jn. 10:2-4) of all “His own” written upon His heart (cf. Exod. 28:29-30). He goes to the cross not *only* as an act of obedience to the Father, but also as an expression of the unplumbed and unfathomed depths of His tender affection and *love* for “the ones who are *His own*.”

What wondrous love is this? Amazing love, how can it be? O the deep, deep love of Jesus! Love divine, all loves excelling. O how He loves you and me. Jesus—loves—me.

We can *know*, today, that He loved us, who are *His own* “**to the end**,” and that He still loves us, even today, “**to the end**.” How should we then *live*... trusting, obeying? “We love, because He first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19).