

## John 13:1-35

### *Having loved his own...he loved them unto the end – v. 1*

The first verse of chp. 13 sets the tone for a new section in the gospel of John. By the time you reach chp. 13 of John's gospel Christ is done debating the Jews. He is done performing the miracles that vindicated his deity. He is done instructing the multitudes in the things that pertain to the kingdom of God.

We find him in this section of John's gospel in seclusion with his disciples. The setting for this section of John is a setting of intimacy. These are Christ's parting words, so to speak, to his disciples. And the burden of our Savior's heart is clearly revealed in this chapter and in chps. 14 –16. Christ desires that his followers know that he loves them. John 15:9 *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

I think this statement could be taken as a key to this section. Christ expresses his love for his disciples and he expresses his desire for his disciples to continue in his love. He also desires that their love for him be manifested by their love for each other. John 13:35 *By this shall all [men] know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

There is no plainer or fuller or more pleasing manifestation of our love to God than that we demonstrate love to one another. This love – then, of Christ to us, of his Father to him – of our love to him and our love to one another is the emphasis in this section of John's gospel.

- John 14:21 *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that **loveth** me: and he that **loveth** me shall be **loved** of my Father, and I will **love** him, and will manifest myself to him.*
- John 14:23 *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man **love** me, he will keep my words: and my Father will **love** him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*
- John 15:10,12 *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my **love**; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his **love**. This is my commandment, That ye **love** one another, as I have **loved** you.*

You see then the emphasis. This is what might be termed the *love* section of John's gospel. And as I said – the tone for this section is set by the narrative statement concerning Christ in v. 1 – *having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

Our time around the Lord's table serves the purpose of enabling us to continue in his love. And the way we continue in his love is by remembering the manifestation of his love to us. He loved us enough to become one of us. He loved us enough to shed his blood for our sins.

And so my desire this morning is that we might utilize this time around the Lord's table to bask in his love.

And the question that naturally arises is *how do we bask in his love?* And the answer to the question is that we bask in his love by remembering his love – by pledging our faith in his love and by professing to him in our faith our love to him. This is what this time is about – this is a memorial supper. *This do in remembrance of me* – is his command to us.

And so think with me first of all – that we bask in his love:

## I. By Remembering the Constancy of That Love -

Our text tells us that *having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

Having loved – he continued to love them to the end. He loved us in the past. He loves us now. If we could extend the application of the verse we could say that he will love us right up to the time that will mark the end of our time in this world. And his love for us at the end of our time will be marked by his presence with us – *yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over.*

And indeed his love will not end there. He will love us to the end of time itself – which is tantamount to saying that his love is an everlasting love that will never end.

*Having loved his own* – our text says. The statement teaches us that all Christ's dealings with his disciples that are recorded in the gospels were dealings that were motivated by love. His virgin birth is a manifestation of his love. His baptism which marked the beginning of his priestly ministry for his people was motivated by love. His trials in the wilderness, his battles against the Pharisees, his instructions, his miracles, his patience with the dullness of his disciples – what was the driving force behind these things? Two things you could say – His love for his father – and his love for those given to him by his father.

*Having loved his own* – our text reads. But we need not limit this love to the beginning of Christ's earthly ministry. This is a love that precedes the creation of the world. *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him, In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children* we read in Eph. 1:4,5.

Here is a love that precedes time. But here is also a love that transcends time – *having loved his own...he continued to love – to the end.* His love, therefore, is steadfast and sure. Because he **has** loved you – he **will** love you. His love can never be forfeited. He paid too high a price for you to let you go. You think about it – if he paid for you the price of his blood – then how valuable are you to Him?

This indeed is a wonderful and humbling thing to dwell on. We're conscious of our unworthiness. We're conscious of our sins. And we're prone to think, therefore, that he can't possibly love us – or he can't possibly love us as much. You need to know, therefore – the truth of the text – that having loved you – he loves you still. You must measure your

value to him not in terms of what you see in yourself. It would take little effort to brand ourselves as worthless to him were we to look at ourselves and become aware of the awful corruption that yet abides in us which in itself makes us altogether unlovely to him.

Look instead at the price he was willing to pay for you – the price of his blood. And measure your value to him by what he paid – and I think you’ll conclude that based on the price of blood his love for you will be as constant as the value of that blood.

So we bask in his love by remembering the constancy of his love. Would you consider next that we bask in his love:

## II. By Remembering the Condescension of that Love –

In vv. 4 & 5 we read that *He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.*

It is indeed a great marvel to think upon the very son of God condescending so low as to leave heaven’s glory to visit this sin cursed world. And the marvel becomes greater when we realize that he became one of us when he visited this world. *He made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men –* Paul writes to the Philippians (2:7).

And we certainly find him in this form, don’t we, in John 13. To think that one before whom the angels must cover their faces would now bow before men and wash their feet defies comprehension. And this was only the beginning of his condescension. He would condescend lower still.

He would allow sinful men to apprehend him. This is a detail in his cross work that is easy to overlook. You remember in the Old Testament the account of Uzzah in 2Sam. 6? David was attempting to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. And they placed the ark on a new cart and when the path got a little bumpy the ark began to tip – and Uzzah reached forth his hand to steady the ark – and for his indiscretion he was struck down.

That ark was only a piece of furniture that typified Christ – and yet such was the jealousy of God for Christ’s honor that he would strike a man down for unwisely handling that which simply portrayed his son. When Christ condescended to come into this world he would allow defiled sinners to actually lay hands on him.

But his condescending love would reach down even further. Not only would men lay hold upon him – they would smite him. They would spit upon him. They would mock him. They would falsely accuse him.

And then they would whip him and they would press a crown of thorns into his brow. And at last they would subject him to the greatest indignity that depraved sinners could invent. They would drive nails through his hands and his feet and suspend him between heaven and earth and leave him there to die a slow, cruel, and agonizing death.

There’s a hymn in our old hymn book that reflects upon this condescension:

*What love it was that brought Thee down, down to the depths in which I lay, That made Thee leave Thy glory throne, In Servant's form to tread Thy way: Yet lower still to death to go, That I might never judgment know.*

We shouldn't pass over the truth – since we're in John 13 – that in his condescending love – a love that led him to take the role of a servant – Christ specifically states that he does so with an aim – the aim being that we might follow his example and serve each other as he has served us.

So we bask in his love by remembering the constancy of his love. We remember the condescension of his love. The bread and the cup serve to remind us of both. The bread reminds us that he condescended to become one of us. The cup reminds us that he condescended lower still to shed his blood for us. And the fact that we are called upon to partake of this spiritual feast until He returns indicates to us that his love is constant and unchanging.

What is it that would lead us to think otherwise? We're sometimes tempted to think that our sins forfeit his love. We're sometimes tempted to think that difficult circumstances are an indication that he no longer loves us. This is why we're commanded to remember his broken body and his shed blood. This feast is a call to be reassured of his love. And we become assured when we remember how deeply he condescended in order to manifest his love. Let there be no room for doubts. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (John 15:13).

So we bask in his love by remembering him – the constancy and condescension of his love. And then consider that we bask in his love:

### III. By Remembering the Completeness of His Love –

*Having loved his own...he loved them **to the end**.*

The time of the end refers to the end of Christ's earthly ministry. The context makes that clear. Verse 1 speaks of Christ's knowledge that he would soon depart from this world and return to his Father.

This was the cause of distress and grief among the disciples. They didn't understand Christ's work. The only thing they were able to grasp was the fact that he would soon be leaving. And so Christ goes out of his way to assure them that it was for their benefit that he would leave. It was not on account of his disappointment in them that he would leave – but it was out of his love for them that he would see his mission of redemption through to the end.

This is the thought that I find striking. Christ would see his mission through to the end because of his love for his people. The pain and agony – the shame and scoffing rude – the cruel torment and the rejection – none of these things would hinder Christ from seeing his mission through to the end.

In the midst of his passion he would never reach the point where he would say *it's not worth it. This world is filled with sinners who hate me and hate my Father. They break my*

*laws. They seek their own ways. They fail to measure up to what they were created to be. The imaginations of their hearts are wicked continually. There have been none that have been righteous – no not one. None have sought after God. None have manifested any reverence or respect toward God.*

*And now they subject me to their abuse. Now they condemn me with no justifiable cause. They fly in the face of what they've seen. I've vindicated my identity time and again but still they crucify me. One of my disciples betrays me – the rest flee from me. Why bother with the pain and torment knowing that in a little while my own Father will turn from me?*

He could have been delivered. He said so himself - *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?* (Matthew 26:53). But instead he sees the work through. Instead he loves us to the end. Instead of backing down from his sufferings he endures them until at last he can make the glorious proclamation – *it is finished!*

Here is love that sees its way through to the end! It's no wonder we sing – *Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heaven to earth come down; Fix in us Thy humble dwelling; All Thy faithful mercies crown. Jesus, Thou art all compassion, Pure, unbounded love Thou art; Visit us with Thy salvation; Enter every trembling heart.*

*Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end* – he loved us all the way to and through his proclamation that his work was finished. And when he made that pronouncement it meant that we would be secure in his love from that point on.

All the obstacles that banned us from his love were now taken out of the way. The many sins that we would commit would be no barrier to his love because he finished the work and atoned for our sins. The justice of God – which demanded our condemnation – which could not merely be overlooked or set aside was now satisfied by Christ so that the wrath that justice demanded would no longer be a barrier to Christ's love.

Indeed we could say in the light of Christ's atoning death that his justice now called for our acceptance. His justice demands that we be received into heaven. His justice calls for everlasting life to be bestowed upon those who believe in him. For God to do otherwise would be to compromise his justice. His love invented the way for God to be just and the justifier of those who believe in Christ.

Do you see, then, what strong consolation we have in our text. *Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.* Because he has loved us he will always love us. Because he has been gracious he will continue to be gracious. Because he has forgiven us our sins he will continue to forgive us our sins. His love is constant and is grounded in what he has accomplished. And so we're secure in his love.

We marvel at his love because of how far he condescended in order to manifest his love. He would leave glory behind, so to speak, in order to come into this sin cursed world. He would take to himself flesh that he might represent us to God. He would take to himself the form of a servant that he might serve his Father and serve his people. He would bow to

wash the feet of his disciples. He would bow still further in a sense to shed his blood. We marvel at such matchless love.

And in his love he would accomplish all that he set out to do. Nothing would stop him – not all the forces in heaven, earth, and hell – even when all those forces would conspire against him – still he would love his people to the end. And because he saw his mission through to completion he paved the way for his love to flow to his people throughout the ages.

And we're secure – we're amazed – we're redeemed – and we bask in his favor. And what he asks in return is that we remember him. Remember the depths to which he condescended. Remember the price he paid. Remember the blood he shed. Remember the pain he suffered. And remember all he accomplished by his atoning death in order to manifest his love to you.

*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (Jn. 15:23). As we remember him around this table this morning let's look to him by faith. Let's render to him the worship that is his due. And let's bask in his love and love him in return.