

Betrayal and Love
John 13:18-38
May 17th, 2026

1. Betrayal _____ (13:18-30)

2. Love _____ (13:31-35)

3. Denial _____ (13:36-38)

4. Applying the Word

a. _____ how He loves us.

b. _____ this new command to love one another.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 13:18-38

1. What are some different ways in this passage that Jesus prepares His disciples for what is to come?
2. How should the prediction in v. 19 lead to greater belief? See also John 14:28-29. What does this tell us about God's sovereign control over the events of the cross?
3. Consider the receiving/sending language in v. 20 in light of John 17:18-23. If we are included in those who are "sent," how should this comfort and encourage us when people respond or reject the gospel when we share it with them?
4. Read the following passages that reference "the disciple whom Jesus loved": John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 21:20. Why do you think John uses that title for himself?
5. In what way is the cross a display of God's glory? (vv. 31-32)
6. If the OT commands love (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5), in what way is this a "new commandment"? See also 1 John 2:7 and John 15:12-13.
7. Brainstorm 3-5 ways that you can love other believers at UBC.

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Big idea: With betrayal and denial in the background, Jesus commanded us to love another as an identifying mark of His new community.

Intro

Twice a year, 17 nuclear scientists and policy experts gather to discuss world events, threats, and the likelihood that we will destroy ourselves with nuclear bombs or other man-made threats. To communicate the danger, they have used a simple graphic since 1947 as a way to show how close to or how far away we are from destroying our world in nuclear war. They use the hands of a clock that is moving closer to or farther from midnight. When there is more tension and uncertainty in the world, they move the hands closer to midnight, the point of total destruction. When there are new peace treaties in effect, they set the clock's hands back. In 1947, the hands were set at 7 minutes to midnight. The nuclear arms race was beginning. In 1953 it moved to 2 minutes to midnight with the successful testing of more powerful hydrogen bombs. In the 1960's the hands were moved back to 7 and then 12 minutes. Tension with the USSR moved the hands to 4 minutes in the 1980s. When the Soviet Union fell in 1991, the hands moved to 17 minutes. Since 2010, the hands have only moved in one direction – closer to midnight. Currently, they sit at 89 seconds to midnight.

Of course, the scientists moving the hands don't actually know the future. They study global events, perhaps with a pessimistic eye. They have been accused of stirring up fear. One of the criticisms is that it scares people, stirs up anxiety, but people aren't able to actually do anything about it.

But in Jesus' life, the clock really was ticking down. And He knew it. There was no doubt in His mind. There was no speculation.

How did He use those final hours?

He washed their feet.

He told them what would happen in advance – He would be betrayed by one of them.

He explained how this would glorify God.

He prepared them for His departure by explaining that He would be leaving.

And He gave them a new commandment – love one another

1. Betrayal **exposed** (13:18-30)

a. This betrayal would come from one of His chosen 12 disciples, one of His close friends.

b. He quotes from Psalm 41:9 to explain this.

i. Psalm 41 is a psalm of David, reflecting on God's care for the helpless. It acknowledges the enemies that speak evil against him and speak falsehood. They devise my hurt. They think they will kill him – "when he lies down, he will not rise up again" v. 8. Then v. 9 is quoted.

ii. He quotes part of the verse but the whole verse shows how it is being used.

iii. **Psalm 41:9** Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.

1. Idiom for an act of betrayal for harm, perhaps like the person walking on them.

iv. The one whose foot He has just washed will lift up his heel against Jesus.

1. It's always tough when someone hurts us. It's much more difficult when it's a close friend. Jesus knows that experience. Jesus understands. Jesus experienced it.

- c. He tells them in advance so that when it happens they will believe in Him.
 - i. A greater depth of belief when they see His prophetic understanding of the future.
 - ii. The narrative is not out of control.
 - iii. In His kindness, Jesus is preparing them. As He faces His final hours, He is helping them.
 - iv. We see in this account with Judas that the betrayal of another person is simultaneously a sinful, willful act by that person for which they will face God's judgment, and it is not out of God's sovereign control.
- d. Although Judas is running in the wrong direction, He will send them and the one who receives them, receives Him. (v. 20)
 - i. Disciples, like us, take the message of the gospel. We re-present Christ for people to receive or reject.
- e. And yet, even though He was confident that this would occur and must occur, He was troubled. (v. 21)
 - i. Lit. Stirred up
 - ii. Fully God and fully man
 - iii. He was troubled that one of them will betray Him
 - 1. He saw it as fulfilling prophecy
 - 2. He saw it as necessary.
 - 3. He knew it was happening
 - 4. He served Judas anyways
 - 5. And yet He was troubled
- f. They did not know who He was referring to, but He did subtly tell John. (v. 22ff)
 - i. Reclining on Jesus' bosom describes the table set up
 - ii. John would have been in front of Jesus so that the most discrete way to talk with him would be to lean back against him and speak quietly. As a cultural practice, this may seem odd to westerners who value their space and personal bubble, especially among men, but there is no implication of anything but friendship and proximity in this scene.
 - 1. It is obviously different than Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper
 - iii. The disciple whom Jesus loved, is John's way of referring to Himself throughout this book. He does so at least 6 times.
 - 1. Carson – not an element of pride “I am more loved than others” but a sense of indebtedness of grace – what a wonder - that I should be loved by the incarnate word!”
 - 2. Maybe similar to how an author of an academic work, not an autobiography, will not speak in first person or use their name but might say, “The author has experienced this...”
- g. Jesus identified Judas by dipping some bread (or some other morsel of food) into a sauce and handing it to him.
 - i. Only John would know who He was indicating.

- ii. Even this was an act of kindness and hospitality.
 - 1. In this same evening, Jesus has already washed Judas' feet. This was another act of kindness and hospitality. Consistent with Jesus' love even to the one who was betraying Him.
- iii. Satan entered him – more than a mere human betrayal. Judas isn't just a pawn. He is making choices. However, Satan, who has been in a cosmic rebellion against God, enters into him.
 - 1. There's some mystery on how all of this works out, Judas and Satan at work. At yet there is a warning about taking lightly the work of evil. There's a warning about saying no to God and yes to evil in a way that your heart is hardened and Satan has great influence.
- iv. Not an equal battle. Not as Ying and Yang, in cosmic balance between good and evil, but in the rebellion of Satan against his Creator. A rebellion that God allows to continue for a defined period of time to accomplish His good pleasure, but a rebellion He will confidently squash.

2. Love **commanded** (13:31-35)

- a. As Judas leaves to do quickly what he has intended to do, Jesus turns to His remaining disciples.
 - i. This begins the upper room discourse or farewell discourse that continues through chapter 16.
- b. He prepares them for His departure.
- c. Now is the Son of Man glorified, and the Father and Son in mutual glory.
 - i. The Father and Son are so intertwined in their operations that the glory of the Son is to the glory of the Father, and vice versa.
 - ii. Glorify – revelation of God's splendid activity, God's greatness, God's power.
 - 1. Where is the glory of God most on display? On a clear, dark starry night when the outline of the milky way is visible? When standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon? When looking through a microscope at the intricate machinery of a single cell?
 - 2. Was it in the tabernacle with the visible cloud of God's glory?
 - 3. It was at the cross.
 - 4. The King washing their feet was a great reversal of expectations. The glory of God in the humility of the cross was an even greater reversal.
 - 5. And yet it reveals God to us in a way that no other event can – He loves, He judges, He rescues, He shows mercy, He suffers, He forgives – and the cross is at the blazing center.
- d. He's going to the cross, going to His death, and they cannot come.
 - i. Carter - He is not leaving the disciples *alone*. He is leaving them *together*.
 - 1. That's what traces the line of argument from "I'm leaving" to "love one another."
 - ii. When our kids were little, but still old enough to be left alone at home, we would leave them a note listing what we expect of them while we are away. Usually, a dad joke also.
 - iii. What's the assignment He gives them – love one another.

e. A New Commandment

- i. Not totally new, in that the OT commanded them to love.
- ii. But new in emphasis and quality.
- iii. New in object – one another in this newly formed community of disciples that He was leaving behind. This community that would gather as more are added.
 1. Jesus taught us to love our neighbors and love our enemies. But here the focus of the love is one another – other Christians – the church.
 2. Not that Christians are to love the world less, but they are to love one another more.
- iv. So essential would this be to the life of the new community, that outsiders would identify them as disciples of Jesus by their love for each other.
 1. Church is not a building to gather in. It is not an event to attend. It is a people to love. It is a community context to obey Jesus' command to love one another as His disciples.
 2. There are different challenges in a larger church than a smaller church in fulfilling this, but it certainly isn't automatic in a small church. There are many small churches where everyone knows each other and everyone gossips about one another, and guards their territory, and chews up leadership. And there are larger churches where people are disconnected consumers.
 3. As a church grows larger, everyone might not know everyone, but everyone should be known by someone. Everyone should have a pocket of believers that they share life with and love.
 4. Membership becomes all the more important as a way to put arms around those who are willingly committing to one another.
 5. One of the best ways to love is to believe the best about each other.
 6. We can grow so suspicious that someone does something, we assume the worst. You get left out of an invite, and you assume, "they hate me. They must have heard gossip about me. They are cutting me out of fellowship. I'm sure they have told everyone else..." or you can think, "It was probably just an oversight. And I know they are juggling lots of things, so that's ok." You may occasionally be wrong in this. But it's much better to err on that side than the other.
 7. 1 Corinthians 13 is an entire chapter devoted to how we are to love one another. The context is the local church as chapters 12 and 14 describe the use and misuse of spiritual gifts and chapter 13 describes the priority of love.

3. Denial ***predicted*** (13:36-38)

- a. Judas would betray Him. They were commanded to love one another as He loves them. But the chapter ends with another down note. It highlights our frailty and neediness.
- b. Peter is fixated on Jesus' departure.
 - i. His response isn't about the great command just given.
 - ii. Not, "yes, we'll do it! Thank you for this new commandment. How significant! How noble."
 - iii. Rather, he is focused on the departure of Jesus.
- c. Peter cannot follow now but will later.

- i. **John 21:18-19** "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." ¹⁹ Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"
- d. Despite his well-intentioned and courageous words, what will happen next for Peter is not bold self-sacrifice but fearful denial.
 - i. **Luke 22:56-61** ⁵⁶ And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too." ⁵⁷ But he denied *it*, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." ⁵⁸ A little later, another saw him and said, "You are *one* of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" ⁵⁹ After about an hour had passed, another man *began* to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too." ⁶⁰ But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times."

4. Applying the Word

- a. **See** how He loves us.
 - i. I mentioned last week with the foot washing scene of humility that it is first a passage about what Jesus did before it's a passage about what we are to do.
 - ii. That continues on here.
 - iii. V. 34 - that you love one another, even as I have loved you
 - iv. He loved first and He loved best and He sacrificed most.
- b. **Follow** this new command to love one another.
 - i. Yet this isn't just a truth to sit and savor how much He loves us.
 - ii. There is an imperative that follows the indicative – Love one another, not in theory but in practice. Not when convenient but when difficult. Not naively but wisely. It isn't a love without wisdom or guardrails. For example, this doesn't mean you continue to funnel money to a brother with a drug addiction, knowing he will use it to fund his habit.

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