John 13 v31-38 CONTEXT

John spent 12 chapters relating the ministry of Jesus spanning 3.5 years.

This was the public ministry of Jesus and now that is ended.

John spends the next 4 chapters (13-17) speaking about one night, when Jesus spent his last time with his D’s before his arrest, the next 2 on the crucifixion and the last 2 on the resurrection….

Clearly John realised the importance of this night.

Chapter 12 shows the ministry of Jesus ending in seeming failure…

Ch12v37 ‘Despite all the miraculous signs Jesus had done most of the people still did not believe in him. This is exactly what the prophet Isaiah predicted.

Jesus summarises his message one last time Ch12 v44 ‘If you trust in me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me’.

Now Jesus spends this precious night with his D’s coaching them one last time in his longest discourse.

The very essence of all the teaching of Jesus will be compressed into this conversation and it is about LOVE.

**Our ability to love is shaped by our experience of love.**

John’s gospel focussed on God’s love and he described himself as the Disciple Jesus loved.

Q- Do you think that this meant Jesus had a favourite?

No! It’s just that John recognised his identity as one loved by Christ and thus his experience of love shaped his appreciation of its importance.

EVENTS BEFORE THE NEW COMMANDMENT

To make sense of our chosen passage, we must look at two meals that took place just before.

The first in Ch 12 was at the house of Mary and Martha and Lazarus their brother, and here Jesus was relaxing with friends in an intimate meal, with the extra special fact that Lazarus had been raised from the dead after 4 days by Jesus a little while earlier (recounted in John 11).

Mary of Bethany shocks everyone by pouring expensive perfume over the feet of Jesus and then wiping them with her hair, a sublime act of humility, love and sacrifice. Jesus says that she did this to prepare him for his burial (which was very imminent).

Now in Ch13 Jesus spends his 3rd and last Passover meal with his 12 D’s.The Passover celebrates the freeing of the Jews from bondage with bread and wine. Jesus redefines this meal by showing that through his sacrifice we are free of the wight of sin, the current bondage. He is the Vine and we are the branches and the bread and wine have a new significance as he links them with his sacrifice of himself.

J is omnipotent, which means he knows everything that is going to happen in the coming days.

Judas comes to the meal having already collected the 30 pieces of silver from the Chief Priests in return for betraying Jesus when there is an opportunity. Jesus knows this and is in control of the hour when it will take place.

Peter, an ardent supporter, who tells Jesus he will willingly die for him, will say three times hat he never knew Jesus.

The D’s will fall asleep in the final hours before the arrest of Jesus despite his pleas to keep him company in this time of anguish.

The D’s will all desert J when he is arrested.

Thomas will doubt the resurrection of J until he has seen physical proof.

And yet despite that, Jesus holds an intimate meal with his D’s hours before his torment begins.

Q- Does this tell us something about the nature of the love of Jesus which is the new commandment?

And it gets more remarkable….

Before the meal begins (CH13v4) Jesus took off his robe , wrapped a towel around his waist, pours water in a bowl and begins to wash the D’s feet.

This is even more shocking than Mary’s act described a moment ago.

Washing dirty feet was a job reserved for the slave of least status; feet were smelly after walking on the hot road in open toed sandals. The D’s had omitted to arrange to wash the host’s feet, they were more concerned to debate who would be the greatest of the D’s.

To set context, imagine you pop to the toilet in this church and you find a set of coronation robes slung across the sink and the King cleaning the toilet bowl!

Just before washing the feet, we read in CH13v3 that ‘Jesus knew the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God’.

So J knew his identity and that he had the complete authority from the Father.

What did Jesus do with all that power given to him…. He washed feet!

Why? To demonstrate to us how to show love.

**If you are secure in your identity you have nothing to prove**. If we know we are heirs of Christ and all authority in Heaven and on earth is given to us, does this not stop us being people pleasers and instead being a blessing to God?

When J gets to Peter, he at first objects and when J says you will have no part of me unless I do this, Peter asks for his head and hands to be washed too. J explains his body is already clean and that it only the dirt of the day that needs cleaning.

This shows that when we give our lives to Jesus, we are sanctified..but we will sin again so we need cleansing again by recognising our sin and asking for forgiveness and Jesus will cleanse the part of us that has been stained.

J asks the D’s. do you know what I have done? If your Lord and Teacher has washed your feet then you should wash others feet.

One more detail I want to bring out… Jesus as the host would determine where the D’s would sit .Reading the scriptures you can work out that Judas was placed in the place of honour on the left of Jesus and John on his right. The D’s would lean on their left elbow and into the chest of the person on their left. The host offers bread to their honoured guest, here Jesus offers it to Judas.

Wow! Jesus was showing that he would love Judas despite the betrayal that was imminent.

Q-Was this amount of grace easy for Jesus? He was God in human form, with human emotions. In Ch 13v21 it says ‘Now Jesus was deeply troubled’. The Greek word used Torroso means agitated deeply.

These were his friends, he had spent the last 3.5 years with them.

Q- Is being betrayed by a friend harder to bear than by a stranger? Yes of course!

Christianity is the only religion where God humbles himself to be amongst us and to understand what it is to feel pain, rejection, sadness, temptation…

Jesus proves that the challenge he gives us, to love our enemies, to forgive our tormentors and those who let us down, is possible because he demonstrated it all the time and particularly on this night,

AND SO TO OUR PASSAGE

We are told Judas has left the room having been called out by Jesus. In Ch13 v30 it says’ at once going into the night…John describes Judas leaving the light that surrounds Jesus to go into the darkness ( where Satan dwells).

In Ch13 v31-33, Jesus says he will not be with them much longer.

And then in v34, our key verse-

‘A new Commandment I give you, love each other just as I have loved you. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

This is SO well known that we could lose its power and significance for us today.

But this is big……

We came into this scene with Jesus seemingly having failed to get his message across, despite his Messianic miracles.

Now Jesus is spending time with his D’s, a bunch of ill qualified men knowing that they could launch a quiet revolution ( with the help of the Holy Spirit) following his death with this mission, the new commandment.

Q- But is it new?

No and Yes!

In Leviticus 19:18, God tells Moses ‘Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.’

In Luke 10:27, Jesus questions a religious man about the law of Moses. He answers ‘You must love your God with all your heart, all your strength and all your mind.And love your neighbour as yourself.’

However the Jews defined the word neighbour to exclude the people they didn’t like such as the Samaritans. Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan to shame them and to illustrate that the love we are to give is to everyone, a completely open definition of neighbour.

So the Commandment is not new, but the Greek word used for new in this passage is KAINOS which means renewed or refreshed.

So Jesus is raising the bar of to whom and how we should extend love to properly represent him.

WHAT IS LOVE?

The true meaning of love in this passage is lost because in English we have only one word for love, but in Greek there are 4 and their use in the bible is very significant.

Eros (AIR-ohs) sensual or romantic love such as in Song of Songs (in the bible reserved for marriage)

Storge ( STOR-jay) love amongst family members

Philia ( FILL-ee-uh) Love of trusted companions and those in need

Agape ( Uh-GAH-pay)Perfect, unconditional ,sacrificial, pure love

In our passage today, Jeus uses the word Agape to describe how we should love another as he has loved us.

THE EPITAPH

At the end of the passage today, Peter tells Jesus that he will die for him and Jesus says no Peter, you will deny that you ever knew me three times.

If we fast forward to the last chapter in John 21 v15 we have the epitaph to our story today. Jesus is resurrected and appears to the D’s on the beach. Peter is overjoyed to see Jesus knowing he has let him down.

J asks him ( paraphrase)

Do you love me Peter ( agape) ie sacrificial love? Peter says yes I love you ( Phileo) ie as a trusted companion

Do you really love me Peter ( Agape)? Peter says yes ( Phileo)

Are you even my friend Peter? ( Phileo)? Peter says yes a third time ( Phileo)

In response each time Jesus says feed my sheep…. In other words go and love others as I have loved you. Peter does just that, we have Pentecost and the forming of the Acts Church which helped all its members such that the church grows exponentially.

POSTSCRIPTS

Judas regretted his betrayal but sadly took his own life rather than seek forgiveness from Jesus.

Peter seeks and receives forgiveness from Jesus on the beach and becomes joyous in all circumstances even unto death.

Q-So what does it mean to love as Jesus loves?

It’s clearly sacrificial ‘greater love have no man than to lay down his life for another’( John 15:13)

And involves forgiveness, humility, patience, grace, is unconditional and unearned and involves loving your enemies.

1 Corinthians 13 ,often read at Weddings defines love further

Patient & kind

Not jealous, boastful, proud or irritable

Does not demand its own way

Keeps no record of wrongs

Rejoices in justice

Never gives up, loses faith

Always hopeful

Endures through all circumstances

Lasts forever

CONCLUSION

Jesus knows that whilst we try to emulate love to the standard he demonstrated to friend and foe alike we will fall short

he knows that and if we recognise our shortfalls and seek forgiveness we can become more Christlike in time

If you remember nothing else from today….

Remember the song we sang, a New Commandment as it reminds us of the task set for us

Know your identity is secure in Christ, you have nothing to prove to the world

Review how Jesus showed love to those that didn’t deserve it in this passage and on the cross

Read I Corinthians 13 to remind you what love we aspire to

Like the Nike logo have a go ‘Just do it’