

The Full Extent of His Love

John 13

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Finding the Love of Christ in the Cross of Christ

"Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love" (John 13:1). With these words we are ushered into the final hours of Christ's life before His death and resurrection. We are invited to watch and listen as Jesus gathers behind closed doors and shares the depths of His heart with His disciples. We are given a front row seat as the scene unfolds. Jesus wants us to pay close attention. What takes place here is not just for those first disciples, it is also for each of us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ.

In verse 1, we are given the key for interpreting what we will see and hear...the love of Christ—the full extent of his love! And we know that the theme behind it all is the Cross. This is the hour of "glory," as we saw in chapter 12; the "hour" in which Jesus will give His life, being "lifted up" on the Cross. This teaches us a crucial lesson...that we must find the love of Christ, above all, in the Cross of Christ.

Too often we look to our feelings or circumstances as the way that we will experience the love of Christ. But this approach can leave us at the mercy of our emotions or our perception of "how things are going for us" at any given time. John 13 teaches us another way. Here we learn that the full extent of Christ's love is found first and foremost not in our feelings but in Christ's actions for us in His self sacrifice at the Cross. This is something for us to hang on to, no matter what!

Context is Everything

As you read John 13, pay attention to the context. It is the time of Passover (vs. 1). Jesus will now become the Lamb of God, our Passover sacrifice. The devil has put it into Judas' heart to betray Jesus (vs. 2). What is taking place is all part of a cosmic battle between light and darkness. There is more going on here than the disciples could even imagine. Jesus knows that He has come from God and is returning to God and that the Father has put all things under His power (vs. 3). This is meant to remind us of who Jesus actually is. This verse takes us right back to John 1 and the incredible truth that Jesus is the eternal divine Word who has become flesh in the midst of this broken world. Got it? Now hold onto all this truth from John 13:1-3; and watch as Jesus gets up, lays aside his outer garment, takes a towel and begins to wash the disciples' feet. What an incredible picture! They had no clue what it really meant (13:7), but we do. We know it all illustrates the meaning of Christ's utter humility and the profound love of His sacrificial death on our behalf. Pray about this. Ask the Lord to help you see this. Jesus is showing the full extent of His love for us. Receive this love...this cleansing!

Knowing and Doing

But there is a whole other angle to this picture. This is also our example. First we are invited to see the full extent of Christ's love for us. Then, we are asked to live out this same kind of love in our relationships in the community of Christ (John 13:12-17). What an extreme teaching from Christ! This teaching humbles us. It exposes us in our selfishness and our self centered approach to life. This is exactly what Jesus intended. As we feel the intensity of this challenge, we need to search our hearts. We need to come to Jesus in prayer and ask Him to help us live in the way of the Cross in the real life circumstances and relationships of our lives. It will not be enough for us to just "know" these things. Jesus said, "If you know these things you will be blessed if you DO them" (John 13:17). So the result of our study in John 13 should be more than ideas. It should be action. What will you do? How will this chapter impact your thinking, your choices, and your behavior? Pray about that! Best of all, Jesus the risen savior is with you (remember—we know how the story ends)! He will not leave us as orphans (John 14:18). He will come and guide us into the very life He is calling us to. But we must not remain passive about these things. We must actively seek Christ for His cleansing through the Cross and actively take action to love our brothers and sisters in the community of Christ. This is the heart of the

Gospel...and it has your name on it. May the Lord bless you as you prepare your heart for Good Friday and Easter! May you truly know the full extent of His love!

For Further Reflection

Allow the following questions to enrich your time in John 13 this week...

How comfortable are you with the notion of Jesus Christ loving you fully and richly? Imagine Christ kneeling before **you** to wash **your** feet. Better yet, imagine standing before Christ on the Cross looking at you in love. How does this make you feel? Uncomfortable? Unworthy? Reflect on this and evaluate your response.

How does this chapter impact your thinking, your choices, and your behavior?

What action do you need to take as you respond to this lesson?