

Don't Go There (Part 2) – John 13:21-38

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John 13:21-38. We're studying the book of John, and we're in the midst of Jesus' final night before he was crucified. And what a night it was. A late-night rap session spanning five chapters. (13-17)

And here, near the start, he addresses four issues that I've put under the umbrella of "don't go there." Because he bookends the passage with two examples we should never imitate.

The first is Judas. To say . . .

Don't be complacent – resist the devil and stay true (v21-30)

The very thing he didn't do. Someone who walked with Jesus personally. Which means . . .

• **If it can happen to Judas, it can happen to anybody**

Anybody can grow complacent. Anybody can let down. Anybody can entertain sin and go the way of the world.

So whatever you do, resist him and stay true.

- Stay true even when you lack
- Stay true even when you suffer
- Stay true even when you're self-sufficient
- Stay true even when you're persecuted
- Stay true even when you wait

That was the first takeaway. Don't be complacent. Stay true.

Outline

The second comes from v31-33. Take a look. [31] *When he had gone out* [he, being Judas; when he had gone out of the upper room where they were eating the last supper], *Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified [referring to himself], and God is glorified in him."* (ESV)

"*Now am I glorified,*" Jesus said. Referring to his impending death. "*Now is the time for me to be high and lifted up.*" That's the idea. In the best sense of the phrase. "*Now is the time for me to be exalted.*"

Why? Why the glory-fest? Because of Christ's *obedience* in dying on the cross. And his sacrifice; his sacrifice for sin. And his perseverance in suffering. And love for the world. For all those reasons and more, Jesus would be exalted; magnified; glorified.

And God too. God the Father. He too would be glorified in Christ's impending death. "*Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* Made to look good *because* of Jesus. Because of what he did on the Father's *behalf*."

It's like a little kid who behaves well in school. It doesn't just reflect well on him, it reflects well on his parents. It glorifies *them*.

Plus, it was God the Father who *gave* his Son; in the first place. And directed him every step of the way. How many times have we seen Jesus say, "I only do what the Father tells me to do. I only say what he wants me to say?" So whatever good the Son did, the Father did. Glorifying both. That's v31.

Then, in v32, Jesus reiterates it and expands on it. Saying the same thing, for emphasis, and a little more, for assurance. He's trying to assure them; steel them; beyond a shadow of doubt. That what was to happen in the next few hours was all good.

After saying in v31 – *Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him*, he says in v32 – *If God is glorified in him [in Jesus], God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.*

In other words, if the Father is glorified in the Son, exalted because of what the Son does; the Son is going to be glorified in the Father; exalted because of what the Father does.

Which is what? Raising him from the dead and bringing him back to heaven. Restoring Jesus to his place of power and prominence at his right hand; the very pinnacle of glory.

"If God is glorified in me," Jesus said, "he'll glorify me in him." And soon. "God will glorify me *at once*. So no worries. Everything's going to be fine. Better than fine."

It's one great big encouragement to say . . .

Don't be shaken – trust God and rest assured (v31-33)

That's the reason for this glory-fest he shares. He knew the ensuing events would rock their world, and they'd be prone to despair. They'd be shaken to the core.

Especially in his absence. The very thing he speaks to in v33 – *Little children* [a term of endearment], *yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews [the crowds; back in chapter 7 (32-34)], so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'* At least not right away. "You'll seek me, but you won't find me."

He's trying to manage their expectations. Because unmanaged expectations will kill you. Like expecting every day in April to be sunny and 80. Or expecting to bear children when you can't get pregnant. Or expecting to get married when you can't find a spouse. Expecting your loved ones to always be around. Expecting perfect bliss in a fallen world.

Don't go there. Because if you do your world's going to be rocked. You'll be shaken. You'll despair. Crumble. Throw in the towel.

Better to trust God and rest assured. Better to manage your expectations according to the truth of his Word. Better to trust that everything he says is true and everything he does is planned.

Trust him and rest assured that it's all going to work out; together for good. Trust him and rest assured that he'll be glorified and you'll be satisfied.

Trust him. Trust him. Only trust him. And you'll never be shaken. That's the second takeaway.

The third comes from his famous statement in v34-35 – [34] *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* It's a *new* commandment, in the sense that it holds the same weight as the ancient commandments; in the *Old* Testament.

Because loving their *neighbor* wasn't new; that's all over the Bible. Nor was loving one another; God's people loving God's people. That's part of the Law.

So it wasn't a new *concept* to love another, it was a new emphasis; an added emphasis. With all the weight and significance of any commandment from God.

And then he adds in v35 – “*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*” If you have it and show it. Have it and do it.

Bottom line?

Don't be aloof – Love one another for all to see (v34-35)

Love, as in give up *your* desires and *your* wants for the sake of others; their desires and their wants. Instead of spending all your time, talent, and treasure on yourself, spend it on others. Give it away.

That's the idea of the word for *love* that John uses here. It's the verb form of the famous “agape” love; the Greek word.

And so many of you practice it. You're living examples. You . . .

• **Give of yourself for the sake of others, whether they deserve it or not, expecting nothing in return.**

That's the kind of love *Jesus* is talking about in this new commandment. It's no longer an eye for an eye, it's *nothing* for an eye. It's nothing for a coat. Take two; deserved or not. It's giving of yourself without regard for what you might get. Day in and day out.

That's the kind of love to which *Jesus* refers. That's agape love. The furthest thing from hate, and a long way from indifference. A long way from being aloof. A long way from being standoffish and detached.

Can I just cut to the chase on this? If you walk in here week in and week out with no love in your heart for those around you – no inclination to serve them and no desire to bless them – something's wrong. At best you're misguided, and at worst you're hateful. Or at least self-absorbed.

Either way, don't go there. If you're *aloof* toward your brothers and sisters in Christ, you don't *love* your brothers and sisters in Christ. Not like *Jesus* said. He said *give* of yourself; extend yourself; stretch yourself. “Agape” one another.

But that's not it. He didn't just say, *love one another*; period; he said *love one another*, colon. Do you see it? *Love one another* [colon; or, like this]: *just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* “Just as I have loved you.” Just as!

Talk about challenging! *Jesus* loved us fully. *Jesus* loved us sacrificially. *Jesus* loves us graciously. And patiently. Truthfully and perfectly.

After all . . .

- **He came to us.** From heaven to earth.
- **He lived for us.** Perfectly fulfilling the Law.
- **He died for us.** In our place for our sin.
- **He rose for us.** So we could too. That's how *Jesus* loved.

And when we repent and believe . . .

- **He forgives us.** No longer holding our sin against us.
- **He cleanses us.** From all unrighteousness.
- **He raises us.** Spiritually. And one day physically.
- **He saves us.** From judgment and hell. That's how *Jesus* loves.

And what's more . . .

- **He intercedes for us.** At the right hand of the Father.
- **He abides with us.** Never to leave.
- **He listens to us.** Anywhere anytime.
- **He blesses us.** More than we could ask or imagine.

That's how *Jesus* loved and loves us. Which means that's what he has in mind when he says, “*just as I have loved you [just as], you also are to love one another.*” (34) You also.

But what's that look like? *How* can we love like him? Because we certainly can't do all the things *he* did.

10 ways.

• **10 ways to love just like Jesus**

I don't know where I first saw some of these, but I adapted them from a list I've had in my file for a long time.

1. **Listen without interrupting.** Is that not how *Jesus* listens to us?
2. **Speak without lying.** Speak the truth in love. How often did he do that?
3. **Give without hesitating.** Like *Jesus* gave his life. Time, talent, treasure, everything.
4. **Pray without ceasing.** *For* one another. It's one of the *most* loving things you can do.
5. **Forgive without wavering.** Praise God *Jesus* does. It's a way to love.
6. **Answer without arguing.** *Jesus* spoke the truth, but he didn't argue.
7. **Promise without forgetting.** Totally his M.O. Make it a point.
8. **Bless without expecting.** The essence of *every* miracle *Jesus* ever did.
9. **Serve without grumbling.** Like the one who *came* to serve.
10. **Commit without faltering.** Let your yes be yes and your no be no.

10 ways to love like *Jesus*. 10 ways to make sure you're not aloof. Don't be aloof.

And one more thing here, make sure your love is obvious. From v35 – “*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*” People will know who we are and what we stand for if we love each other openly. For all to see.

Let me ask you something. Would anybody know of your love and commitment to our church by what they see in your life? What they see you doing and not doing? How they see you spending your time? Who they see you hanging out with? Would they know?

Would they have to *guess* you're a follower of Christ, or would it be apparent? Would they *know* you're a disciple, or would they be surprised?

Make sure they know. Make sure your love for God's people and God's church is apparent. Make sure your colors run bright. Make sure people can see.

That's the third takeaway. Don't be aloof. Love one another for all to see.

And last . . .

Don't be cocky – Follow Jesus humbly and devotedly (v36-38)

[36] Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" [Referring to Jesus' statement in v33. It's like he missed the entire love thing. Or just ignored it.] *Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now [same thing he said in v33], but you will follow afterward."*

[37] Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." [38] Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

Peter was cocky. First he questioned Jesus, and then boldly proclaimed his allegiance. As if it was written in stone.

Do you remember what happened to Zechariah, John the Baptist's father? When he questioned an *angel*? He was struck mute! For nine months! And that was an angel.

Peter questioned the one angels serve. The one to whom they bow. "*Lord, why can I not follow you now?*" (37) Right now. Let's go! I'm surprised the other disciples didn't say, "Dude, do you know who you're talking to? Don't be presumptuous. Don't be cocky."

What's more, he declared his allegiance as if it was unquestionable. Unimpeachable. Indisputable. "*I will lay down my life for you.*" (37) As if to say, "Do you know who you're talking to? I'm the rock. I'm the man. You said so yourself." (Mt 16:18)

Don't get me wrong; I don't know for *sure* if that was his tone. All I'm saying, is that he *believed* what he was saying beyond a shadow of doubt or shred of uncertainty. No dependence on God, no acknowledgement of weakness, no need for help, nothing. Just cocky.

Don't go there. Don't be cocky about your faith. Don't be smug about your allegiance. Don't be arrogant about your commitment.

Do you know how many people have thrown in the towel and *renounced* Jesus? Do you know how many have turned their back on him and fallen away? Or faded into oblivion without a word? And the vast majority, despite their best intentions. Absolutely *certain* they'd never walk away.

Don't go there. Follow Jesus humbly and devotedly.

Humbly . . .

• By acknowledging your complete and ongoing dependence on him

Acknowledge your dependence on Jesus. To him and everybody else. And not just once, but every single day. Every single hour.

Realize and admit that apart from him you can do nothing (John 15:5); not even *stay* with him. Acknowledge the fact that unless *he* holds you, you'll *never* remain.

Follow Jesus humbly and meekly by acknowledging your complete and ongoing dependence on him.

And follow him devotedly . . .

• By being consistent with your spiritual disciplines

Read the word, pray, and abide in him every single day. Go to church and worship him every single week. Trust and obey every single minute.

In other words, practice the spiritual disciplines. The things that allow God to mold you and shape you. The daily practices that allow him to pour out his grace in you and on you. And add fuel to your fire. Do them over and over and over, without fail.

I remember the hardest part about basketball practice was putting my shoes on. Actually putting them on and lacing them up. I don't know why, but it was a barrier; a mental battle. Maybe it was the repetition itself, or the work ahead, or the fact that I hate changing clothes at all.

Whatever the case, once I did, once my shoes were on and laced, I was in. All out and all in. I would have stayed on the court all night. Played 'til I bled.

Same for the hard work of spiritual disciplines. Practice them, do the right things over and over again, put your amor on, and you'll follow Jesus right into eternity. Even if you bleed. No turning back, no denial, no nothing. Just humility and devotion.

Summary

Four issues. Two by example and two by teaching. Don't be complacent, don't be shaken, don't be aloof, and don't be cocky. Don't go there.

Prayer – Father, we come to you in complete dependence. Trusting you for everything; life, health, breath; salvation, love, perseverance; everything. Forgive us for getting it wrong sometimes; for living and acting like we can do it ourselves. Increase our awe of your glory, our love for each another, and our devotion to you.

You Are Loved