A Key to Recovery – Love One Another as Seen in Jesus' Life

Let us have another word of prayer as we continue in His presence.

Lord, we do thank You every week for this precious opportunity to gather here and with ones throughout this world who are putting You in remembrance. Lord, we are thankful how it was You who first loved us. You have drawn us to Yourself. Lord, we have been able to feast around Your table. And Lord, we are thankful too You have left us Your Word, Your Holy Spirit, so that we may continue to feast on this bread of life. Lord, we will break that bread of life this morning and feed upon You, feed upon Your Word, O Lord, for that is our true source of nourishment. Without it, we are nothing. And we do, Lord, offer ourselves to You. We open the ears of our hearts to what Your Spirit would have to say to us in this hour and these days. In Your wonderful name we pray. Amen.

Introduction: The Call to Love One Another

We have been sharing together on this matter, one of the keys to recovery. We started off by sharing about the call to love one another. Then last week, we saw that we are to love one another as He has loved us. This week, we want to look at this matter of loving one another as it is seen in the life of Jesus—to really look through His life to see the great love that motivated Him in everything that He did.

The challenge today is our familiarity with the life of Jesus. We love the stories. We want to get beyond the stories and see His heart, His motivation, the "why" of what He did. As we look at the life of Jesus, we are doing so because He is the Son of Man. When we look at our Lord, we see how He is described in the fullness of His name as the Lord Jesus Christ. Those are not just flippant names.

Each one has a very specific purpose. When we think about "Lord," that is His divine authority, His supreme authority and power, His divine nature. When we think about "Jesus," it speaks more of His humanity as the Son of Man. When we speak of "Christ," He is the promised Messiah, the Anointed One to the Jewish people. And He brings salvation to the whole world.

Throughout Scripture, we see these names used interchangeably and in combination. Sometimes it is "Lord Jesus Christ," sometimes "Lord Jesus," sometimes "Jesus Christ," and even "Christ Jesus." We are intentionally using the name "Jesus" to focus on His humanity as the Son of Man, that we can be encouraged in our own humanity to allow the life within us to lead us into the overcoming, successful life that He has given us.

The Setting John Chapters 13-17

As we have been sharing, we have been looking at the setting there in John chapters 13 to 17, and it starts off in John 13:1. This verse sets the scene for the chapters and reveals the essence, heart, and burden that was upon our Lord when He was with His disciples. It says, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who

were in the world, He loved them to the end (uttermost)." He knew His hour had come. He knew where He was going. He was returning to the Father.

He knew He had been there with a purpose. And He also knew that those He was leaving behind were utterly helpless in themselves. And in His great love, for He had loved them to the uttermost, He was preparing them. These chapters, 13 to 17, are preparing them for what lies ahead that they could come to see and know the all-sufficiency of Christ, the relationship they have been brought into with the Father, and that precious fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

As they hear these words for the first time in John 13 to 17, they do not fully understand them. But as they start living them out through the book of Acts, we see the eyes of their hearts being opened more and more to understand all that the Lord has done for them.

Now, as we are reviewing, Jim Bog says a good teacher always reviews. If that is the standard that Jim says, I have to do that. The accountant in me would just push ahead, but we will review a little bit here. In these days, the question is often asked: "What is God doing?"

The Purpose of God: Recovery

And we are thankful that we know that our God is a God of purpose and a God of recovery. He is not just doing recovery work these days. Ever since the fall of Adam, He has been doing a recovery work to bring the people of God, to bring His creation back to what He originally intended for them. Today, that is really focused on recovering the testimony of Jesus—the testimony of the life of His Son, the testimony of Jesus—where His headship is expressed among His people, where His life is manifested through His people, not only individually but also corporately. That there is that testimony of: there He is. Praise God for that.

And as we have said, the key to this recovery always starts within the individual hearts of each brother and sister. As we talk about following the Lord and allowing Him to do a work, it is a heart work that He does—the deepest work He does is within our hearts. He brings our hearts into full alignment with His heart. We know how our Lord Jesus' heart was devoted to His Father's purpose.

He wants our hearts awakened to know Him—not just knowing about Him but knowing Him in reality. To know Him in reality and in life: His heart, His desire, and His purpose. Thank the Lord that the Holy Spirit continues to cry out to us in this hour, in this day, and in this time.

As we said, there are two aspects of this recovery that we have been speaking of. That personal, intimate relationship with Him—that vertical relationship that is so vital, so essential, and is the very foundation that we have with Him. This is typified in the Book of Ezra, when they return to establish their relationship with Him. The second aspect is that love for one another, the horizontal love, that love, care, and relationship with each other.

This is what we see in the Book of Nehemiah, where together they are rebuilding the wall side by side, working together, assisting, and helping each other.

We said, as we are looking at John 13 to 17, that this was the last time the Lord was with His disciples before the Cross. He was getting ready to demonstrate His great love at Calvary. He was really sharing with them to prepare them for what lies ahead. They did not know what was coming, but He wanted to share with them.

As I mentioned, He was sharing with them the blessing they have been brought into: the fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Within that fellowship there is a security in that fellowship, there is a peace within that fellowship; there is encouragement and support within that fellowship; there is love and unity within that fellowship as we see exemplified in John 13 to 17. This is what He is preparing them for; He is showing that this is the way, this is the full provision that has been made for each and every one of us. And we are ever so thankful for that.

Throughout John 13 to 17, there is this message of knowing. And the knowing here throughout these chapters is reality. It is not the mental apprehension but knowing something in your heart— knowing the reality of this fellowship that we have been brought into. It is not just talking about it. Knowing, being driven by the knowledge of the absolute love that we need for one another. The Lord is also really crying out to us, and every time we take this table, He is crying out to us that we would know how much the Father loves us. Just as He loved Him, He loves each one of us. Just as we think a lot about Jesus' love for us, the Father's love is also so strong. As we mentioned, we should know the person and work of the Holy Spirit, because within that, as we said, our God is a God of purpose. He is doing this great work of recovery with the end in view. And in Christ, He has made every provision for us during this process. The great comfort we have is that He will return. Just like William shared at the table, He will return.

That is part of the beautiful aspect of this table as we take it until He returns. What a joy we have there to remember His death, to remember the wonderful testimony of His resurrection—that death could not hold Him—until He returns. It puts hope within our hearts.

The New Commandment: John 13:33-35

We have been using as our theme verses John 13:33 through 35. Last time, we touched on John 13:33, focusing on the little phrase, "little children," just this intimate phrase. So, the personal way that the Lord looks at and considers us, saying that this is the only time the Lord ever uses this phrase, is in this verse. It speaks of the significance of it, the intimacy, the love that He has for each of us. He continues in verses 34 and 35. We spoke last time about the new commandment, the very nature of it: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

We looked at that phrase in the broad sense of "even as I have loved you." But this time we want to look more closely at this love for one another, this love that He has, is

displayed and seen through His life—and His love is displayed and seen through His life with a purpose. And that purpose is in verse thirty-five. He says, "By this all men will know." What a testimony that is—not just some.

All men will know when they see the life of Christ in you; when they see this love manifested in you, they will know that you are My disciples. When you have that love for one another—something beyond yourself—this is what He is jealous for. This is what He is working for.

The Challenge of Familiarity and the Depth of Christ's Love

As I mentioned, when we talk about this matter of the love of Jesus, usually you get two responses. One, "Oh, I have heard about this my whole life." We can actually make it common and devalue it in such a way. May that never be the case. May we repent of that attitude.

It is so precious. It is so fresh. The love of Jesus is not something that is elementary in nature; it is something that we never fully apprehend upon this earth. But we see how some of us touch it—oh, yes, I know about the love of Jesus—and we are satisfied with so little, just a little bit of it, and it satisfies us and we stop. And then, at other times, we can think, wow, He is speaking about the love of Jesus, it is just too high. I can never understand this. Well, actually, that is pretty good. That is the starting point. You cannot understand it, so stop trying to understand it with your natural mind.

Because He wants it to be learned through your heart, through life in Him. You cannot understand this love. Man has tried to write about it, to understand it. We see even in our worship this morning—the accountant in me always wants to count things. Sorry about that, but John and I have this habit of doing that.

I have lost track of the number of different ways ones have tried to describe the immeasurable love of God. I am not even going to start, but there were just so many different ways ones were trying to describe it. And whatever way we use comes up short. It is all true, it is all an aspect of it, and we praise God for it, but it does not capture the full essence of it. And oh, one day, though, thank the Lord, when we are with Him in eternity, we will begin to grasp the full essence of it.

I am not sure even in eternity if we fully grasp the essence of it, but we grasp a lot more than we are grasping now. When we think of this love of Jesus—and this is what encourages me about it—Paul writes about it in I Corinthians 13. To me, one of the key phrases in this chapter, when we are talking about the love chapter, is when he says, "For we know in part … For now, we see in a mirror dimly …" What a comfort that is, because much of what we see of the Lord, we really only see and know in part; we see it dimly. But as we go on, we experience and learn of it more and more in a fuller way.

Now, the part we see is real. It is absolutely real. It is true, solid, but it is not the fullness of it. I think if you just reflect back on it, like with your salvation or justification or baptism, there was a time when you were first saved and you thought, "Wow, salvation is

wonderful, justification is wonderful, baptism is wonderful." But as you went on, what you saw back then was just a small part. And it kept growing and growing and growing, and that is the love of God.

I was sitting over here this morning, and when you sit over here, you get to look out at these beautiful dogwood trees. Now, if you have never been in this area, if you have never seen azaleas and dogwoods, you can look out at this time of year as they start coming out and say, "Wow, they are beautiful. Look at that beautiful dogwood out there."

But then you come back next week, and it has come out a little more—wow, it is even more beautiful. And then, someone from around here might say, "Oh, yes, those are just ordinary. They are not so beautiful. We see them all the time." But just wait a bit.

But you see in part at first. And then that dogwood keeps coming out, blossoming more and more. It comes into that fullness. And then you say, wow. Once you see that fullness, none of the other things satisfy.

You are always waiting for a greater manifestation of something. And this is what we are talking about as we go through considering the love of the Lord and how we see it in part. Oh, this is great: He touched me, He saved me, He healed me, He restored me, He encouraged me. And we can be satisfied.

But no, He wants that to cause a hunger to know Him more so that we will see that fullness. And then, all of a sudden, when we thought we knew Him as a place of security, we went through a trial, and we are really shaken up. But through that shaking, what do we learn? More and more of the security of the love of Christ. We know that through those trials and tribulations, we come to really know Him more and more. And we are thankful for that.

The Fullness of God's Love

Paul speaks of this matter of coming into knowing the fullness of Him. Paul even writes about it in Ephesians 3. In Ephesians 3:19, he actually has a play on words here: "And to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." How do you know something that surpasses knowledge?

But that is your prayer: "And to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." What Paul is saying here is that he is praying we would know the reality of the love of Christ in our hearts, because that is a love which, in ourselves, we cannot comprehend—it surpasses human knowledge. There is a human knowledge this surpasses; we will never know it. But in spiritual reality, we can come to know this great love.

Praise God for that. Thus, we do not just stop knowing part of it; we keep pressing on to the fullness of His love. And the fullness of His love is shared in Scripture. The verse was read during our worship today.

John 3:16 – God's Love as the Foundation

Many verses that I have today were read or shared. But praise God, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." Brothers and sisters, without the reality of this verse, we would not be here today. This verse has settled it for us throughout all eternity. May we never think it elementary or simple or look down on it.

It is one of the most profound statements in Scripture, one of the most powerful statements in Scripture, one of the most all-encompassing statements in Scripture. This is why we are here—all because of His great love, that He sent His Son to die for us. That we, whoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have eternal life. Praise God.

Comprehending Love with All the Saints

But as you look at this, we can look at this verse in our own way and we can think that all of the love of God is focused on me. The love of God becomes me-centered. Well, He does love us that way, so do not downplay that. But He has an even greater expression of His love that He wants us to see. He wants Christ to be dwelling in our hearts, not only for ourselves and our individual salvation, but He is praying here again that Christ can dwell in our hearts through faith, not our mental apprehension, something beyond what we might understand without faith in what He says. "That you, being rooted and grounded in love," —our solid and sure foundation— "May be able to comprehend with all the saints." Notice here, it is not so much about me anymore; it is about all the saints. It is spreading out here. "May be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge," the verse that we read about a minute ago.

Praise God. He is comprehending us all the same. This brings us into that fuller purpose of what He is after—experiencing the fullness of His love. His love. As He poured out His life for each one of us, He wants our lives poured out for one another. We see that the fullness He is after is the greater expression of His life among His people. Again, in Ephesians, we see how this is so clearly expressed through His great love for His people. We call it the Church; it can be the body of Christ, the family of God.

Christ's Love for the Church – His Bride, the Corporate Purpose

"Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." Yes, it starts with our personal salvation, but His goal is that we will be built together as His church. Because we know, as we have said before, love builds up. Love is in the building process, it is doing this building work, building us together.

In Colossians, it does not use building, it talks about being knit together. I love that little phrase too— "Having been knit together in love."

Because that church is His bride. The Father loves the Son so much—He wants His Son to have that eternal companion, that bride. And we see in this the jealousy for this to be expressed through us. It is sad, in the days we are living in, how much the word "church" has lost the power it once had; those called-out ones, gathered together unto Him.

Because of the days we are living in - you say He wants the church, and our minds can start going around and looking at the condition of things. But this is speaking of His church, the pure, spotless, precious church of all His saints gathered together, cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. That final product that He is after, some say it is the spiritual church in heaven. But praise God, brothers, and sisters, this is what He is after for all of us, far beyond just us as individuals.

The Prayer of Jesus: John 17

I think one of the precious things that we have shared about in John 17 is how our Lord is praying for His dear ones. And look at this particular aspect of one of the prayers that He prayed in John 17, which, as we have said, is the Lord's Prayer.

We can just go through these verses carelessly. We could have a conference on one of these verses—verse twenty-two. "The glory which You have"—this is—He is praying to the Father.

"The glory which You (the Father) have given Me (Jesus) I have given to them." He is given us that glory, with a purpose, "That they may be one, just as We are one." He wants us to be united. Can we fully comprehend all that He is calling us into?

The Process of Being Perfected in Unity

Just as Jesus and the Father are one, He wants us to experience that same oneness in Him together. That is why He continues on in verse 23: "I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity." It does not just say that we will be in unity, but that there is a perfecting process that God goes through to bring us into the unity that we have in Him. He spoke of this in Ephesians. Paul writes about how we have the unity of the Spirit when we are born again. Every believer who is born again has the unity of the Spirit; there is one body out there. Experientially on this earth it might not look like that, but every saint has that where there is a oneness of Spirit, we are one. That chapter continues on.

It says until we attain the unity of faith. Often, we allow that unity of the faith to end up dividing us. We will not go there now, but it just shows us that there is a process—experiential unity does not just appear; there is a process. And that process is the love of Christ working in us—a love that lays down its life for one another, a love that works through us.

The Testimony to the World: God's Love in Us

And again, it is with a purpose: that the world may know—that is, again, that testimony. All that He is doing is with this testimony in view: "So that the world may know

that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me." Again, He wants us to know, "Father, just as You sent Me, that You love them just as much as You love Me."

That is a tremendous statement. It is a place of great security, knowing that as we enter into the love of Christ, He wants us to know that within that love is the love of the Father. It is the same love—a love within the Godhead. And He wants us to enter into experiencing that.

When we consider the love of Jesus, may we see the richness of His love for each and every one of us. There is a richness in His love that He wants us to explore. And we can see that it goes beyond just me. Praise God, He loves me. Praise God, He died for me. But there is an old song—I will date myself now. There is an old song that says, "We've only just begun." Remember that you have only just begun. I cannot sing it, but anyway, when He saves us, He has only just begun.

Some of us think it is over then, but no, He is just beginning to do a great work in us. As we see His love for the church, His bride, that becomes a motivating factor within us. Praise God for that. Again, as has already been mentioned, seeing the Father's love for His Son, seeing how much He loves Him and loves us, and that we can demonstrate that same love.

The Love of Jesus Displayed in His Life

Let us look more specifically at the way our Lord Jesus is loving us in His life. "Love one another as I have loved you." We ended last week on this, and as we said, Jesus does not talk about loving one another in a naive way. He knows that we cannot do it ourselves. Sometimes we have to come to terms with that reality, because we think we can love on our own.

We can love certain people in a sympathetic way, in an emotion-based way. But no, it is far beyond that. This is a true heart love from on high. He knows we cannot keep His commandment, but He gives us the provision Himself. He says to love one another because it is not a commandment that impels us to do something from the outside, but it is something that comes from within.

The Fruit of the Spirit as Expressions of The Love of Jesus

Joy Is Love's Strength

It is the fruit of His life, the fruit of the Spirit. We mentioned that the first fruit of the Spirit is love. Some interpret this to mean that the fruit of the Spirit is love in a singular sense, and that each of the other qualities in that verse describes love in a specific way, for example, joy is love's strength. If you think about some examples from the Lord's life, you can see how that joy was His strength. There was a joy set before Him that enabled Him to endure the cross, providing Him with the strength to keep pressing on—that love.

Peace Is Love's Security

That peace. He said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you." He is actually giving us that peace. He had peace from the Father, and He says He is leaving peace with us. And His personal peace He is giving to us; that is love's security. It is the security we have in knowing that place of peace. Being at peace with God is a great place of security.

Patience Is Love's Long-Suffering

Patience is the Lord's love; it is love's long-suffering. And I cannot think of a better example of His patience than with His disciples. He was so patient with them. He would do things, say things, tell them this and that, and they would not get it. He would ask, "Do you understand that?" and they would say, "Yes, we got it, we got it." He knew fully well they did not get it. But He is so patient; He is patient with us. Praise God for that. That is a manifestation of love.

Kindness Is Love's Conduct

His kindness is God's character—kindness is love's conduct. When you think of His conduct, you think of His kindness. I just think about how kind He was to that dear Samaritan woman at the well. He just came right alongside her in love and kindness. With gentleness, He just wooed her unto Himself. Praise God for that. He did not correct her theology. He just showed her Himself: this is who I am. That opened the eyes of her heart.

Goodness Is Love's Character

Goodness love's character. In Acts, it talks about how the Lord went about doing good and healing people. You can see all the good things, the healing, the manifestation of the goodness of His love—as it manifests His very character.

Faithfulness Is Love's Confidence

Think of faithfulness as love's confidence. He was faithful. There was confidence in the love that He had. I will say, I think about it a couple of times in moments of crisis, like on the Mount of Transfiguration—His character, He had to be faithful to go all the way through, not return. He could have returned to heaven. There would have been that one perfect man in heaven. But no, He knew of a purpose, a purpose driven by the faithfulness of going through Gethsemane, the faithfulness of going through Calvary.

Gentleness Is Love's Humility

And His gentleness, His love's humility. I think of the gentleness He showed to the woman caught in adultery. How gentle. Again, He did not condemn her, but was so gentle with her, seeking to restore her and bring her through. And these are just a couple of examples. It is pretty broad. If you start looking at them, you will probably think of various ones yourself.

Self-Control Is Love's Victory

Self-control is love's victory. Self-control is love's victory. And I think about how He, as the Lamb being led to slaughter, did not open His mouth. He just freely went the way of the Cross. He knew what was set before Him. And He allowed it, through that Lamb being led to slaughter, He was there. He won and showed that great victory of love.

The Purposeful Love of Jesus

You look at His life—no matter what circumstances He faced, no matter what He was going through—He always had time to pour out His love for others. Ones were pressing Him to go this way, there was somebody in need here, He would go. Pressing Him to go another way, Lord, come here. No, He had time to show His love for one another. As we look at the love seen in the life of Jesus, His love was always with a purpose and an end in view. Because He wanted the reality of the love of the Godhead to be in us, He wanted that so much.

And even as our brother shared this morning from John 15. John 15:12 repeats the theme verse we are using. He said, "This is My commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you." And then again, as our brother shared, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." Praise God, brothers, and sisters.

He was not naive. He knew He was going to Calvary. He knew what was ahead of Him. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He came to earth as a freewill offering. But He also knew that He wanted a special treasure that He was coming for. He wanted each one of us to have the testimony of Himself, that we would become part of that special treasure. And He denied Himself every day. Sometimes we think about Him going to Calvary as when He went to the cross. But actually, as you look through His life, every day He was denying Himself, daily taking up His cross, and obeying the Father.

The Life of Jesus: Key Events as Expressions of Love

We are going to go through His life. And again, may we see beyond just the familiarity of the story to see the heart, to see His essence. When He says, "I want you to love one another as I have loved you," as we look at His life, we are looking at the demonstration of His love toward us. These are teaching examples that we have.

Incarnation: Leaving Heaven, Humility in Birth

We start with His incarnation. At first, when I prepared the slide, I had His birth. Then, as I was actually reading Brother Kaung's book, "But we see Jesus,"—yes, technically, He was born to Mary, but He existed long before. He was not just born; He existed far before He came to this earth.

It was that Word that became flesh. In the beginning was the Word. The Word became flesh and came and tabernacled among us. We beheld the fullness of His beauty, full of grace and truth. What a wonderful incarnation He had.

And when you think about even coming to this earth, how He left the splendor of heaven, it is beautiful to just stop and consider that He had perfect fellowship from all eternity past with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Yet They desired in Their hearts something more—They wanted His purpose to be completed. In order for that to occur, the Son offered Himself willingly and said, "I will go and be that Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world and redeem mankind back to the Father that We can have that companion for the Son to live with Us throughout all eternity." Praise God for that. We are thankful for how He was born. When we think about who He was—the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Creator of all—God did not pick out somebody special, somebody of very prestigious upon this earth.

But there was this little servant girl in her home, unknown to man but known to God. He noticed. And how the love of Christ notices each and every one of us. But we might not all be known by man in our greatness and all of that. Yet each one of us is known by God, and He loves each and every one of us. He said, "Ah, that is My Mary." He was born in that humility, in that dirty old feed trough. There was no other room for Him. I know that gets glamorized and they make movies about it and everything, but it was just that there was no room.

Sometimes we think we deserve special treatment. No, the love of Christ came in. It was the love of Christ that came in and reached underneath a Jacob and raised him to be an Israel. It was not Jacob. It was the love of Christ that went to the depths of Jacob's despair—his twistedness. All of the ways you can describe a Jacob. And because of His great love, He lifted him up and transformed him into an Israel. Praise God. He is doing that and desires to do that in each one of our lives. No buts. He desires to do that in each and every one of us. Do not listen to the enemy who says God does not love you, that God does not care, or that He cannot do something in your life. No, He can. He is more than able to do abundantly.

Yet as a baby—a helpless baby—He had to flee for His life. It was not like He got special treatment. This whole idea of guardian angels just standing around protecting Him is not accurate. No, He went through these things to demonstrate that love.

Because He was born of a virgin, people talk and people gossip. People noticed Mary was pregnant. She was not married. "Oh, this kid right here is born in fornication." He had to live with that throughout His life and was accused of it publicly to His face. But He did not allow the accusations of man to hinder His love for mankind. The very ones that accused Him of being born in fornication, He laid down His life for them, to save them and redeem them. Praise God for that. Yet when somebody insults us, we are done with them, forget that. No, the love of Christ loves the unlovely. This is who He was dealing with.

Hidden Years: Serving in Obscurity, Waiting for His Father's Timing

We know that within His childhood—what we call the hidden years, those 30 years when He was hidden. And just think about that, how hard that is for the flesh. The flesh always wants to boast of itself and to be seen. And you remember too, He knew that He

had a calling on His life. He knew why He was there. He knew the purpose. And yet, because of His love for the Father, He waited for the fullness of time. He waited for the Father's perfect timing for Him to come into this ministry. And during those hidden years, He served and loved faithfully right where He was until God's time for Him came. Brothers and sisters, I love how He demonstrated that love in a hidden way that meant nobody was really seeing it—loving His brothers, even though they did not really care about Him.

His parents—we see His parents did not fully understand Him, as it says He was left in the temple after they had been there. He says, do you not know, I had to be about My Father's house or be about My Father's business. Mary, obviously, and Joseph had some understanding of who this was, but they did not fully understand the fullness and completeness of it until a little bit later. But we see how He just took on that life of a bondservant, the hidden life, serving when no one else was noticing.

And I praise the Lord when we hear in the body of Christ how oftentimes it takes a funeral for things to come out. But through a funeral, somebody will say, oh, this brother did such and such for me. This sister did such and such. The testimony, praise God! And nobody knew anything about it. You are sitting at the funeral, and you hear, "Wow, they did that. They did that?" Because sometimes we do something and we say, "Hey, I took them a meal. I did this. Did you all see?"

But sometimes it is just that hidden life of the Lord, that love not drawing attention to Himself, not wanting anything, but just truly serving the Father, serving one another. What a love that is.

We see that when He began His public ministry, He did not receive a very good reception because He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him; they rejected Him.

But praise God, the rejection of man—the rejection by the very ones He came to—did not impact His love for them at all. And now, that is a challenge in life: when others reject you, do we still have that love for them? All of a sudden, they unfriended us. All of a sudden, they do not respond to our texts. All of a sudden, we are not hearing from them. Do we just stop? Do we give up and say, "Well, let us move on to something else?" No, He loved them to the uttermost. He loved all the way through. What a lesson is there.

Public Ministry: Rejection, Temptation, Accusations, Unwavering Love

As we know the story of the temptation, how He endured the agony of forty days of fasting. I mean, one day of fasting is agony, for me at least. But we saw forty days of fasting—He went through that. And then the temptation comes. It is good to keep it in perspective. Sometimes we think the temptation was during the 40 days, but no—the enemy waited until He was in His weakest condition. Then he came with the temptation. But love held Him through that because He saw beyond. He had a purpose. He knew He had to keep going with the Father's purpose. And during His ministry, again, some made all these accusations; He was not only rejected, but some said He had a demon.

How many of you have been accused of having demons in you? And what did you think of the person who accused you of that? It did not affect His love for them. It is a love that goes beyond and sees beyond. And we already mentioned the number of times His disciples did not understand Him.

But He kept going. We also have, in the story of His public ministry, how He went back to Nazareth. He had been raised there, and He went into the city synagogue. This is where He had been raised. It says it was His custom to go there. He picked up the book of Isaiah and started reading it. He read and shared from Isaiah. All of these people knew Him. They were glad to see Him back. Hey, there is little Jesus coming back now. And look, He is picking up Isaiah, picking up the book again. He is going to read. And we know how, as He starts reading out of Isaiah, He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." I will just condense this: Preach the gospel to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, set free those who are downtrodden, and proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. What a glorious message. Then He closes the book, sits down, and says, "Today this prophecy has been fulfilled."

What were they thinking? Their whole attitude had changed. All of a sudden, they are in a rage. They are trying to kill Him. You see the fickleness of man. One minute they love Him. One minute they are trying to kill Him. One minute they want to make Him the king. The next minute they wanted to stone Him. We see how fickle man is. But praise God, His love for mankind—His love for us—is not fickle at all. It never changes. It does not waver at all.

Regardless, He keeps pressing on. And through that, we see how even at this time, when He went to the matter of the transfiguration, what a glorious story that is. As we mentioned earlier, He could have gone back as that perfect man, but He knew He had a calling and a purpose from God in His life, and He had to stay and go back down. He knew that He wanted to have that.

I love how Luke talks about this, "But after He went back down, He set His face toward Jerusalem." And it was not like, "I am setting My face to go to Washington D.C. to be a tourist." No, when He is talking about setting His face to go to Jerusalem, He knew full well He was going to Jerusalem to be crucified. He was going to die, and He was going to be raised again on the third day. There was nothing naive about Him. He fully knew what was going to happen.

But He set His face with that purpose, He was going there. And why was that? Because He lived in a kingdom not of this world. It is described as an upside-down kingdom. And we see an upside-down kingdom, and I remember this is taken from Christian Chen's teaching. How in the normal triangle, the kingdom of this life, man rises to the top, controlling everything. But in His kingdom, we have the servant king taking the lowest place, serving everybody else.

We see what a beautiful example this is: the black triangle, dark and evil; blues, heavenly, light, beautiful. Those are the tones there, if you did not get it. That is my artistic

ability. I did not have Anna around to draw something more beautiful. But we see it here. But He lived His life as if He were not on this earth. He was part of another kingdom. Sometimes, as we are in this world, we get a little bit too attached to it. Do we realize that? Where is our citizenship, our true citizenship? And in our true citizenship, we do not even need an ID card, because He knows each one of us by name. He calls us by name and says, "Ah, this is My child." What a kingdom we have been brought into. Then we go to the upper room.

Upper Room: Washing Feet, Loving to the Uttermost

We touched on this considerably last week; so, I am not going to go through it again. But like you said, He knew His hour was coming. He washed their feet, including Judas, probably loving them to the uttermost, and told them that one would betray Him. Peter denied it, saying, "Oh, no, no." Well, that is not Peter betraying; it was Judas.

He told them one was going to betray Him. They started arguing over who was the greatest. He told them He was going to leave, and they could not come with Him. It was just this great love that He had, preparing them, letting them know. And this is the love we see at the table—the assurance we have of His continued love and that He is going to return for us.

Gethsemane and Calvary: Suffering, Forgiveness, Caring for Others Even in Agony

We come to Gethsemane. Now, as we come to Gethsemane and Calvary, this is a really tough time. These are tough chapters to even touch. There is a reverence associated with these, and just a whole otherness—may the Lord speak to our hearts. When He said, "Not My will, but Thy will be done." His will was perfect; ours is not. We have sinful desires. But praise God, He knew why He had come, and He had to go through this. And He wrestled. I appreciate the wrestling that He had to go through. There is an intensity here. But in spite of these events, He loved to the uttermost—the agony, the sweat.

Even the ones who were closest to Him could not even pray for an hour with Him. They were just overwhelmed by the spirit of the time. And then, actually experiencing the kiss of Judas—even at that point, He is still trying to recover Judas. He reaches out to him, and He is abandoned by all His remaining disciples. He is abandoned by man. It would appear that He is lonely there by Himself. But He is not. His Father is with Him. His Father has never abandoned Him.

It reminds me of how Paul, at the end of his life in II Timothy, says, "Everybody has deserted me." But it does not stop there. What does he say? "But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me." That is the love that holds us. Everybody might abandon us. We do not know what will happen ahead. We do not know.

But these horrific circumstances did not impact His love for one another, His love for us. He grieved, yes, but He still loved and kept going. And then He goes on to Calvary, as we said, this sacred, reverential thing. You shy from even touching it. He had to endure that arrest, being stripped of His clothing, mocked, that crown of thorns pushed upon His

head, spat upon, and beaten. This is the King of Kings. This is the One who has loved us and died for us. And yet, in His great love, He was able, in all of His suffering, to say, "Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing." I cannot fathom that. I just cannot. I cannot fathom it. It is the love of another kingdom, not of this world.

Even in the midst of that, on the cross, He is not thinking of Himself. He is caring about His mother. He looks over and says, "John, take care of her."

The two thieves beside Him—He still desired that they be saved. Reaching out to them, He still loved each one to the uttermost, all the way through. Praise God. As we look and consider this matter of the love seen in the life of Jesus, we see overall that Christ had a purpose, and it governed His life. Do we have that purpose? Have we received what the Lord is desiring and what He is after? As we see God's heart of love, as we see the love of Christ, we will see beyond just ourselves, we will see what is upon God's heart and His purpose. That will enable us to go through also: that love of His Father, that love for mankind, and that love of the Church. He desires our love for one another to be manifested in our lives together for that same purpose. That is where we come to John 13:35.

The Testimony of Love in the Early Church

Visible Testimony: By This All Men Will Know

"By this all men will know." We read this verse earlier—how His purpose, His heart, is to have a living, visible, corporate expression of His life and love on this earth to serve His people, to serve His purpose, being that testimony. It is that visible testimony to the world and the unseen powers—His life expressed. That testimony of Jesus. He desires us to truly come into this. It is all with a purpose. When we see this, it is beyond just us individually. There is a barrier we have to break through in ourselves to see that the work God is doing is beyond me. I am included in it, it is wonderful—all the blessings I receive. But the ultimate purpose, that ultimate desire, is beyond me. It is His heart to have that bride for His Son—that corporate expression of His people.

May ones, as they are looking, as they are seeing His testimony, these ones spoken of here, "By this all men will know you are My disciples." As ones are seeing His testimony, may they see ones loving one another as He loved them, seeing that lived out in a very special way. Seeing ones laying down their lives for others who would not naturally be drawn to serve. It is one thing to serve somebody you like and respect, but it is beyond that. Seeing ones serving, caring for, and loving others with no personal gain or recognition—just that hidden service unto Him.

Early Christian Testimony: Love For All, Distinctiveness, Perseverance

As they see when they look at ones, they would say, surely the Lord is among us. Like Jacob said, surely the Lord is here. When Jacob woke up from that dream, he said, "surely the Lord is here." May we have that. May others have that assurance when they look upon His people, when they see the life of Christ being expressed through His people, far

beyond just us in this world. Surely the Lord is in their midst. This is the wonderful testimony that occurred not only during the New Testament, but even during the first and second centuries. They were still under Roman governmental control, and persecution was starting. There are numerous recorded testimonies from Roman soldiers. The soldiers, as they would testify, would have to write out a complaint.

And some of the things that they were saying about Christians were a marvelous thing because they could not understand it. It was just different from the mind of the soldier. They dwell in their countries but are simply sojourners. They are not putting down roots here; they are just passing through. There is something else about them. They marry as others do, and they beget children, but they do not destroy their offspring. I mean, abortion was going on back then, and the killing of unwanted babies was practiced quite often, but not among Christians. It was noticed so much that it drew a distinction: wow, these people do not kill their babies. They love having children. And I love what this one guy said: "Yes, they have a common table, but not a common bed." Because of the immorality that was all around them. There were a lot of common beds in society, but they had that common table. They all shared it.

And also, they passed their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven and they love all. And he said they love everyone, whether they are believers or not. They love all people, and they are persecuted by them too, but they still love them. How can you figure that out? What a testimony this is.

And the testimony of these believers actually led to the salvation of some of the Roman soldiers and others throughout the world at that time. They are reviled, and yet they rejoice and bless; when they do good, they are punished as evildoers. Some of these things sound kind of familiar today, do they not? If you do good, you are counted as evil. But we see, if you look back at this, that this was the life that Jesus lived.

It is really His life expressed through these ones, through His body. And that is the issue: where is this testimony today? Now we are going to go ahead and stop here today, and I will continue at some point in time—I do not know when the next time will be. But I want to look at the "one another," the love, His love, the practical outworking of the love for one another in our lives. And as I mentioned, it is used over fifty times in Scripture.

Whether you are talking about accepting one another, humbling yourself before one another, being at peace with one another, or being compassionate toward one another, all of the various ways of loving one another manifest in very practical ways in our lives. We want to consider that. Most of them are positive, but some of them are negative. Do not grumble against one another. I do not know why you would say that; I have never heard a believer grumble against another. You should not gossip about each other. That does not apply; so, we will not worry about that one.

Conclusion

But before I lose my train of thought, let us conclude. Let us wrap it up for today.

The Laodicean Era: Drifting from God's Heart and Purpose

The Lord is interested in His testimony today. Today is the day of salvation. This is what He is looking for: His life to be manifested. And as we look around today, we can say, in general, we have drifted away from Him. We are not where we should be as the people of God. That is why these days are referred to as the Laodicean era. That church in Laodicea said, "We are rich and we have need of nothing." He said, "Oh, repent. Buy from Me what you need for that recovery."

We have drifted away from His heart and purpose. You drift away from Him; you are going to drift away from His heart and His purpose. And it has weakened its testimony on earth. And what is sad is that one of the things that has been most severely impacted by this is that it has weakened the desire for His gospel. Now, I was not exactly sure which word to use.

The Weakened Testimony and Desire for the Gospel

I came up with "a desire" for His gospel because the gospel has not been weakened. I did not want to give anybody that impression. His gospel is true; it is steadfast, it is certain, it is a fact. But the desire for His gospel, even the openness to receiving His gospel, has been shut down in these days because people look at Christians and say, "I do not want to be like that. They are just fighting among themselves. They are dividing, they are doing this. They take each other to court." So, there has been an impact upon the desire for the gospel as it goes out. Praise God, it is still as powerful. Do not let anybody misread that.

But as we see, He is still loving all of us to the uttermost. He is with us, and may we respond to His love as His love touches us. We want to pray that the Lord will reveal His love to us afresh, in a way that goes far beyond what we have experienced. We thank the Lord for the part we have seen, even though we see dimly. We are thankful for that, but we want to see much more—we want to see His love in a way that we can be controlled by it. Paul said the love of Christ controlled him; it constrained him. It is a love where we surrender to Him, no longer living for ourselves, but for Him who first loved us and died for us. The practical impact of the love of Christ in our lives, and through the working of His love, may we recover that visible reality—that seen testimony of the love and unity we have in Him.

The Call to See His Great Love

Praise God, brothers, and sisters. It is still called today. It is not too late. God is crying out with a cry of love for each and every one of us to see afresh His great love. None of us has seen the fullness of it. We all want to see more of it. And may we have hearts open to Him, hearts desiring Him. As we see His heart, our hearts are then driven by His purpose. Lord, You have an end in view and I want to be part of that. I do not want to be a hindrance to it. I do not want to slow You down. I want to hasten Your return. I want Your bride to be made ready. Lord, I have surrendered to You in a way. Please show me how to love the brethren. Show me how to love these unlovely ones.

It is another kingdom. But praise God, there is a life within us that has overcome, and that life within us—that all-victorious life—is simply desiring to break forth and to manifest itself to us and to this world. That His kingdom would come and His will would be done upon this earth as it is in heaven. And we would cry out with great sincerity, "Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus."

Some of us cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus," and it is out of selfish motives: "Lord, come and get me out of this mess." It is all about us, it is not about Him. We want to pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, that Your heart may be satisfied because Your bride has been made ready." That great wedding feast can now occur. That is why we want You to come, for Your satisfaction. You have laid down Your life for us all these years. You have loved us so much. We want to be standing on Your side—for Your heart, for Your purpose, for Your desire—that You would receive everything You should receive and are rightly entitled to. May the Lord reveal in our hearts, in a fuller and greater way, His great love for us, to us, and through us.

Let us pray.

Lord, we again find ourselves touching the edges of Your ways as we reflect on this love of Christ. But Lord, one thing we know and have settled within our hearts is that You have loved us to the uttermost and have made every provision for life and godliness in Christ Jesus. Lord, we have Your love within us, and we want to be those who respond to that love. Lord, You are jealous to reveal Your Son in our lives. You are jealous to reveal Your heart and Your purpose to us. May we not resist that revealing. May we not say, "Oh, it is too high; I cannot understand it." No, we want to allow You to do the work that You desire to do in each of our lives individually, and even more in our lives together. Lord, we pray this for ourselves. We pray this for all Your people, for Your saints. Lord, pour out Your love, pour out Your life. Bring ones to a place of falling down on our knees in repentance before You, Lord, that we may be raised up in victory, knowing that greater victory that we have in You, Lord. In Your precious name. Amen.

A Key to Recovery – Love One Another as Seen in Jesus' Life ____ *1*

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