

The Final Days of Jesus
LOVE & LOYALTY
Thursday, March 12
Reading: John 13:31-38

John 13:33 *"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for Me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. 34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."*

With Judas gone, Jesus knows His time is brief. He has much He wants to share with these eleven men before He leaves them. Though these next few days would be dark for the disciples, Jesus viewed them as glory. Jesus' glory was revealed in the cross and God was glorified by His obedience. That He would be glorified "at once" is Jesus' looking ahead to His resurrection and ascension.

Jesus now tells His disciples that He is going away and they cannot follow. His primary concern was that His disciples love one another. This would be the evidence that they were followers of Christ. Peter seems to have missed this command and focused instead on Jesus' leaving. Jesus had said that he would follow later but that was not good enough for Peter. He wanted to follow Jesus NOW. He was confident that he was ready to die for Jesus. But the Savior knew Peter better than Peter even knew himself. Sadly, Jesus informs Peter that before the next morning dawns he will deny knowing Christ three times.

LESSON ONE: "Love One Another As I Have Loved You." Jesus would return to this command again on this evening (John 15:12) and it would become the theme of the Apostle John's first letter (1 John 2:7-11; 3:11). Jesus takes the Old Testament command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18) and elevates it to a higher standard. Believers are not to love others merely as they love themselves, but are to love "as Jesus loves." That is a much higher standard! The world should be able to identify we belong to Christ by our love. In what ways do you show love to your fellow Christians? To your neighbors? To your co-workers?

LESSON TWO: "Lord, Why Can't I Follow You Now?" We cannot fault Peter for His love for Jesus. He wanted to always be with his Master and could not conceive of any situation that could separate them – even death! But Peter's problem was he ignored what Jesus had said – "Where I am going, you cannot follow now." He had told them that they would all desert Him this night (Matthew 26:31-35). But Peter insisted that he would remain loyal even if everyone else ran away. Satan was using Peter's pride to set him up for a big fall. But the gospel of Luke informs us that Jesus was praying for Peter. Although He knew Peter would falter, he also knew that he would not permanently lose faith. His testing, failure, and repentance would help Peter to better strengthen the other believers (Read Luke 22:31-34). When we face temptations, we can know that Jesus is praying for us as well (see Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). When have your emotions or own agenda kept you from seeing God's plan for you? How does the fact that Jesus is praying for you help in your daily struggles? How can these struggles help you strengthen someone else today?

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31)