

John 13:1-20 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴ rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet,^[a] but is completely clean. And you^[b] are clean, but not every one of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."¹² When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant^[c] is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. ¹⁸ I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled,^[d] 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' ¹⁹ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

Without ballast, a sailing boat will capsize when the winds blow against the sails. As believers we need ballast so that we won't capsize when the winds of the world blow against us. Figures from the 2021 Census show that, for the first time, less than half of the population (46%) have ticked the box to say they are Christian. 37% say they have no faith. Already there are calls from groups like the Humanist Society for changes in our country to reflect this. The World Cup has become a platform to promote an LGBT+ agenda and our culture has now become a place where, if you question any of these trends, you get ostracised and are hounded on social media. All of this has led to hostility towards Christians, who risk losing their job or their friends if they speak out.

It is a culture where there is fear about taking a stand, confusion over how to react and pressure to conform.

This is the world where God, in his providence, has placed us – the world in which we are to

- Live out godly lives and to love unbelievers
- Serve and witness to those who don't know Jesus

As Christians, how will we manage not to capsize when these winds of fear, and pressure to conform blow against us?

We need to put into our lives the ballast of heavy, weighty truth about God and his Son and especially

the truth about Christ's love for us.

Christ's first love for his disciples never faltered, not even when he himself was under immense pressure.

His first love for them was an enduring love (he loved them to the end (v1 above))

Jesus knows that he will be going back to the Father and that means leaving his disciples in a world where there will be fear, hostility, confusion and pressure to conform. One of the ways he equips them to thrive as his people is to pray for his Father to keep them (**John 17:11**). Not only does he pray for them, but he demonstrates his love for them by serving them, teaching them and dying for them. His love for them was remarkable in the light of:

1. **The faltering humanity of the disciples.** In the world's eyes, they were not great men. Most of them eked out a living on Lake Galilee. They were argumentative, impetuous, self-centred, fearful, forgetful, proud and unbelieving. We read of many occasions when Jesus needed to rebuke them. Yet he loved them and never gave up on his love for them.

- In love, he had chosen them in eternity past. They were his own and he had called them into fellowship
- In love he had taught them, protected them from the religious elite, saved them from storms at sea, fed them when they had no food and healed members of their families.
- In love he had opened up his heart to them – a significant marker of his love for them
- In love he was always tender with them, even when they gave him cause to be irritated

Their human failings did not get in the way of his love for them.

He loved them to the end

His love for them was remarkable in the light of:

2. The future sufferings of Christ. Jesus showed his love to his disciples even at the end of his life (v1 above).

In a few short hours after this Jesus will be:

- In agony in prayer as he contemplates the horror of suffering on the cross
- Arrested by a mob with clubs, spears and swords, dragged away and wrongly accused of blasphemy
- The crowds whom he fed and healed will reject him as they call for him to be put to death
- Beaten until he is unrecognisable, stripped naked and left to die in one of the most agonising forms of execution
- Suffering under the weight of Hell as he endures the wrath of God for the sins of those he died to save.

Jesus is concerned to love them as he comes to the end of his life. He shows that love by

- Serving them - washing their feet (vv 5ff above)
- Teaching them – assuring them of his love for them (**John Ch 14** onwards. Please read in your Bible)
- Dying for them – in the greatest act of love the world has ever witnessed, Jesus will go to the cross to secure salvation for them and endure the suffering of hell in their place

Jesus knows all that will happen to him, yet his heart is for his disciples.

He loved them to the end

We can see how Jesus loves those disciples but how do we see his love for us?

The disciples serve as representatives of all disciples of Jesus. What Jesus did for them, he does for all who, like them, follow Christ. Just as Christ loved them, so he loves all who follow in their footsteps with the same unchanging love.

Christ's love for them is the same love for us.

- Just as he loved them to the end, so we too were in his heart and he loved us to the end
- Just as he loved them despite their human failings, so he loves us despite our human failings
- Just as he loved them despite his own anticipation of future suffering so he also loved us in that same moment

How do we experience that love today? In the same way his disciples did – through Christ serving us, teaching us and dying for us.

a) Christ's love for us is seen in every act of Christian service. Washing the disciples' feet was an act of self-abasing love by Jesus. He did the job of the lowest servant in the house. John wants us to see that this act of service was an act of Jesus' unchanging love for his disciples.

Jesus expects his followers to do as he did and to serve their fellow disciples in the same way. The motivation, strength and grace to do this kind of self-abasing serving only comes as Christ indwells us by his Spirit. Where there is Christ motivated, Christ empowered, Christ exalting service to other believers, that service becomes a demonstration of Christ's love. When a fellow believer shows us a kindness that is motivated and empowered by Christ,

in that moment we are experiencing the love of Christ.

Think of all those acts of kindness that have been done to you by other believers:

- The cake or meal that appeared on your doorstep
- The anonymous financial gift, or even one that is not anonymous
- The lift given to hospital
- The conversation where a fellow believer listened and then prayed for you

Even if the motive was not entirely pure, you can be sure that, because Christ providentially rules over every action, then behind all those acts of kindness is Christ. Even if the person did it in their own strength, you can be sure that, because all we have comes from Christ, then the ultimate strength to do that kindness came from Christ.

You can take every kindness done to you as an expression of Christ's love for you.

b) Christ's love for us is seen in every Christian message that assures us of his love. The hearts of Jesus' disciples were troubled. Jesus speaks to reassure them (**John Ch14** ff). A repeated theme through this discourse with his disciples is his love for them.

Although Jesus is no longer physically present on earth, we have his word to us, we have his Spirit to witness to those words and we have his ministers to teach his word.

Christ gives us all of that as an act of his love for us, because he wants to reassure us of his love

As Christ's word is preached, the minister is trusting Christ that he (Christ) means for you to be hearing (or reading) the message. He is trusting Christ that he is saying what Christ has given him to say, and that Christ will take his words and apply them to our hearts.

- That must surely change how we anticipate coming to hear God's word being preached
- That must surely change the way we listen to every Christ exalting sermon

Every Christ exalting sermon is a demonstration of Christ's love for us.

c) Supremely, Christ's love for us is seen in him dying for us on the cross to secure our salvation. Jesus said:

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13)

He then assured his disciples that they were his friends. His dying for them on the cross was an act of love for them. It surpassed washing their feet or teaching them. Those actions of love had pointed forward to this greatest act of love.

Jesus' death on the cross was the greatest demonstration of his love for his disciples

and it was his greatest demonstration of his love for us.

2000 years ago, the Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed his life on the cross for you and me. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He satisfied the just condemnation of God that hung over us because of our sin. For us to satisfy this just condemnation would require an eternity in Hell. Jesus did it for us in those six agonising God-forsaken hours on the cross.

What took Jesus to the cross and kept him on the cross? It was his love for us.

This is the ballast we need to put into the boat of our life so that we will not just survive the winds of the world but also reach out with the same love of Christ to those who are ignorantly and damningly embracing a secular life, a confused sexual identity and pursuing the god of materialism which can only lead to eternal ruin.

Jesus loves us with an unchanging love that is seen in every act of kindness, every Christ exalting sermon and supremely in the cross of Christ.