

1/16/22 - John 13:31-35 - "Don't Forget the Plumbing"

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Date: 16 January 2022

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[0 : 00] So I don't think we have to be reminded of the darkness of our day within our culture and our time period.

We can quickly observe the societal condition within just a few minutes on Facebook at various times.

We can surf the Internet and very quickly we can come to a conclusion that the world is dark. There is great darkness in our day. We're surrounded by moral lostness, civil lostness, that everything revolves around doing something new.

The latest, the coolest, the newest idea or concept of how to view the world. And secular ideas seize the day to sort of like rearrange and redefine even the most basic principles of life.

[1 : 05] Some relating to just gender identity, gender expression. And becoming our own law enforcement from a moral and a civil standpoint. It's almost like I'm wondering like when are red lights going to be optional?

Because you can't tell somebody what's right or wrong. You know what I mean? And so, I mean, we live in Youngstown. I think all red lights are pretty much optional. But you have to at least do a courtesy stop.

Then look around and then get scared and then keep going. Right? But it's a dark day indeed. It's a dark day. And in line with the passage today, John will notate the condition of which the church is called to exist amid the darkness.

And while the church seems to have become immersed in their own ideas, many grand ideas, of pragmatism, of getting all like stilt walkers up on stage to really draw your interest and curiosity and make the church cool and appealing to methods that will draw the crowds in.

The church then begins to rely on their own methods to build God's church. Today, I have a sermon titled specifically, Don't Forget the Plumbing.

[2 : 34] Don't Forget the Plumbing. And let me defend that for a moment before you check my sanity. Because I relate this problem to home renovation projects.

That so much time is often spent at the detail work within a house. The drywall, what colors of paint that we're going to put on the walls, trim, and all the things that meet the eyes.

And then, all of a sudden, you turn that water main in, and you're like, uh-oh, this is a catastrophe. We forgot about the plumbing.

And all of a sudden, all of that, the finished drywall, the nice paint, the trim, all goes to waste because you forgot the plumbing.

And as a culture is sort of in line with doing something new, in the newness of our day. The church is called to remain steadfast in actually something old.

[3 : 49] It's rooted securely in the newness of redemptive history, as John is bringing to our minds in the passage today.

But there's a question that this will pose for us as a church, as we look upon his word today. Have we forgot the plumbing? I'm going to break this up into two sections today as we look upon his word.

And there's certain elements of the text. If you have the Bible open, I encourage you to keep your Bibles just on your laps right here. Open your phones and keep it open.

Because there's two things that really stand out in this passage. It's the newness of this night and the newness of this night within the structure of John's writing here.

So let's look at the first section, the nowness of this night. The nowness of night. Looking at verse 31, when he had gone out, Jesus said, now is the son of man glorified.

[5 : 08] As the farewell discourse begins, and in the following chapters after this, Jesus directs his attention from the one who has departed when he had gone out, meaning Judas, when he had gone out, a time has come that was not there previously when he was in their midst, but it has come now, now that Judas has departed.

And attention is solely given to the disciples who are gathered. And the emphasis of this occasion revolves around this timeline, it seems.

This timeline within this discourse that Jesus is emphasizing that has arrived. And in verse 31, we see now. This almost points to a simultaneous event that is happening at the same time of this discourse.

Something is transitioning. But what is John trying to communicate is transitioning from, and what's it transitioning to? Where is our direction and attention going to?

So looking at where we've come from, stepping back to verse 1 and following in the previous verses, Jesus took upon the role of a servant as a statement of humility that ultimately found its fulfillment upon the cross.

[6 : 36] And the foot washing became a symbolic act of that inward heart cleansing that was accomplished at Calvary. And this then pointed to the issue leading to Judas' dark condition of his heart being called out by Jesus giving Judas, I mixed those words up today, if I mix it up today, Judas and Jesus, don't stone me for heresy, but just raise your hand or something and I'll correct myself.

But that's when Jesus gave Judas a morsel of bread as Peter was inquiring, motioning to the disciple that Jesus loved of who would betray him, who would perform this evil act and Jesus gave a morsel of bread to point Judas' sin out.

And this was the last great act of love that Jesus offered to Judas. But in verse 31, now. Now is the Son of Man glorified.

This is sort of like an emphatic pronouncement. In fact, it is by every sense of the literary context. A time that has not come is now here.

The Son of Man is glorified. This is the last account in the Gospel of John that the Son of Man will be self-designated by Jesus.

[8 : 04] It's been mentioned 13 times thus far in the Gospel of John of the Son of Man, the Son of Man, the Son of Man. And all of the references were significant to point to Jesus' authority and Jesus' power, Jesus' glory.

Glory. And this reference here is referencing to the person and work of Jesus Christ as well. This roots back to Daniel 7, verse 13 and 14, where one will be presented to the Ancient of Days.

God. And upon this one who is presented is given dominion, glory, and a kingdom in all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and His kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. Now the Son of Man is glorified.

Isaiah 43, verse 19, says something about the nowness of this night where He even prophesies, Behold, I am doing a new thing.

[9 : 22] Now it springs forth. Do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. In essence, church, according to the text, John is making it clear that it will only be through the suffering of the Son of Man that will reveal His glory.

In other words, the hands of betrayal will actually lift Jesus up in glory, making a way in the wilderness, living water to drink in the deserts.

And so, look in verse 32. Isn't it interesting? It's almost, I had to actually write this verse out to make sure that I was getting it because glory is just all over verse 32 and it's referenced five times.

Glory is referenced three times in the past, referring to something in the past, and it's also equally twice referring to something in the future.

Jesus is kind of like paradoxical that there's a future action in mind that's referring to His glory, but also a past action that's occurring in the present that this is a timeless thing as Carson says.

[10 : 47] It's a timeless reference as the present situation balances both the past and the future glory of Jesus Christ. I don't know if you're awake today, but this is foundational in our lives.

This is a truth that we will die upon knowing this to be true. That the manifestation upon the cross, the cross is a supreme manifestation of the glory of God.

And it is here that the cosmological weight of all the verses, all the actions of foot washing, of Judas betraying Jesus, find their fulfillment and find their purpose.

Christ's exaltation as the Son of Man occurred paradoxically through the means of shame and sorrow.

Here and now, at the time that has arrived, Jesus Christ will bear the wrath of God through the hands of human cruelty and human injustice.

[12:13] There's no other means that can successfully communicate what Jesus truly meant when he said, for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

We can quote that, my Son knows it, and we can say that all we want, but do you know the true and significant pain that it took upon his body in order to pay the price for our redemption?

This is so deep, so true, and something that we as a church have to have a firm grasp upon, that our lives are so yoked to this truth that we can never take our hands away from that.

Hebrews 12, 2 says, Jesus is the founder, the perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.

For the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of God. In other words, what the world meant for justice as killing Jesus would bring about a just system of getting rid of the problems so that the nation of Israel at the time could still be in good reputation with the Roman civilization.

[13:51] So get rid of Jesus. What the world intended as justice, you see, served as injustice.

And it was through the hands of injustice of which God intended to provide ultimate justice. justice for our sin and justification.

And we see in verse 33, with the weight of the last reference to him being the son of man, this one prophesied back in Daniel 7, Jesus turns to his disciples.

Judas is out clinging his money ready to betray Jesus. And he turns to his disciples. He says, little children, yet I am, yet a while, a little while I am with you.

You will seek me. And just as I said to the Jews, so now I say to you, where I am going, you cannot come. He's referring to an earlier time when he addressed the Pharisees that he didn't want them to die in their sin, essentially, to come to Jesus while he is still here, and to turn from their sin.

[15:15] But now for the disciples. There's a proximity that's going to be changing with Jesus. And this reminds me of an affectionate address at the deathbed of a father, possibly, where children are gathered around having their last moments, the last conversation with their father who's soon to pass away.

And essentially saying, in many words, things are going to change after I'm gone. We see Judas' departure versus Jesus' departure.

Judas' departure is one for personal gain. Jesus' departure is for the disciples' gain. Judas' departure from this scene was that of aimlessness in sin, his lostness in sin.

Jesus' departure is for the redemption of sin. It was precise. And so, John is making it clear that two things in this discourse are departing, Judas and Jesus.

And the departing of Judas is the means of glory of God being manifest in Jesus Christ. And we see that that is the nowness of the time.

[16:45] And Jesus continues in the newness of this night as well. We see the newness in the new commandment that Jesus gives. In verse 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. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

It's almost like, okay, can we say it one more time? Love one another. It just rings, it echoes, it reverberates in our minds when we read a passage like this.

And with Jesus' departure being made known to his disciples, it brings about sort of like that military general giving those commands and preparing his men for battle.

Jesus is preparing his disciples through that affectionate address, little children, things are going to change soon. A new commandment, it's language, it's almost placed forward even in the original language, it's placed forward in this sentence and it kind of communicates if there's any Star Wars fans sort of like Yoda, a new commandment I give to you.

[18 : 04] You know, it's kind of like he could have said a different way, like I give you a new commandment, but a new commandment, object, I give to you. He's bringing emphasis, it's an emphatic mention here, command to love one another, emphasizing it.

What's so new about this love though? Church, come on, what's so new about it? I believe it's the object of the love Jesus is referring to, I believe it's the objective as well that Jesus is referring to, because the object, consider the object of this love, it's not an independent love, it's not loving for the sake of saying that you've done it, it's not selfish, it's definitely not mindless, Christian love is instead a subset, a subset action founded upon the love of God.

In other words, just as Jesus is the embodiment of God's love, for God so loved the world in John 3, 16, just as Jesus is the embodiment of God's love, so too the church is the embodiment of the love of Jesus Christ.

There's a parallel union at stake within the object. Christian love is rooted in sacrificial service. Christ's sacrificial model provided that for us.

And when this is identifiable among a church, primarily, not exclusively, this is the only place the church loves, we think that we're getting it wrong.

[19 : 48] But if this is identifiable among the church, primarily, not exclusively, Jesus Christ will also be glorified through that.

And we also see the objective nature of that love, because love then becomes a witness to the watching world. It's not, look how much the church knows.

Look how much the church does. But it's rather, look how much the church loves. And this changes everything.

The world would see the glory of the church that's resonating from their love that's expressed within, and in turn, they would glorify God.

As detailed in verse 35, by this all people will know that you are mine, disciples, if you love one another. This type of love, it doesn't negate the imperative of Leviticus 19 or Deuteronomy 6, of loving your neighbor as yourself.

[21 : 01] It's not negating the love for God at all. It's not negating any of the moral law, the Ten Commandments, but what if love, and I want to get deep, for a minute, if you're not tracking, just tell me to rewind.

What if the love, our love that we have within our midst is the litmus test of our love for God and love for neighbor?

What if this here is actually a litmus test for our vertical union with God and our horizontal union and our service and love to one another?

God Augustine said, and he suggests that both commandments of the great commandment, remember the Pharisees challenged Jesus, what's the greatest commandment? Remember that? And he says to love God and love your neighbor essentially in short words. And Augustine suggests that what if love for God and love for neighbors is actually fulfilled in this one new commandment?

[22 : 11] Could it be that if Jesus is the embodiment of God's love and the church is the embodiment of Jesus Christ's love, then this is the only means of which God's love originates and cultivates first within the church body before the expansive witness and fulfillment of the greatest commandment of loving God and loving our neighbors?

It all begins here, together. And the only way that the church can get this right is by being made right with God first, having a cleansed heart, and in so having a cleansed heart, regenerated soul. We are given a new status, a new nature that Ephesians says that we are sealed and we are truly saved. And so from that birth, all new actions, all new nature, all new longings in life.

Jesus Christ is making it clear to his disciples, their circumstances are changing, yes, they are changing, but it will challenge, equally challenge, the condition of their hearts, whether it has also been changed.

Think about it in this way, if the demarcation line, that sort of sense of being set apart, this is big within the Old Testament with the nation of Israel throughout the wilderness, they were to obey God's commands.

[23 : 47] Think about it, if the demarcation line back then, the people of God in the Old Testament was obedience to the law, the demarcation line of the New Testament is supremely expressed in the love within the Christian community.

Now, I don't want to get this wrong because it's within the Christian community, it's not love through the Christian community, there's something here within this upper room that Jesus is communicating that is vital to the life and the health of the church, and the sad reality, truly supremely sad reality that the church must understand is that we cannot love the way Jesus Christ intended if we have not been cleansed, and this will make itself known by the litmus test of our love for one another.

And if we cannot love one another as Christ has intended, our love for God and our neighbor becomes simply just empty religious acts of piety.

It's paying lip service that we love God. It's doing social activism with a motivation that is not in line with glorifying God, it's all glorifying yourself.

There's something important that Jesus is making clear here. I want to make sure that we know this as well, and I'm going to challenge us all in just a moment, but just as the departure of Jesus, or here, I just did it, just as the departure of Judas is the glory of Jesus Christ, the departure of Judas, the act of betrayal, the act of sin is the glory, is the means of the glory of Jesus Christ, could it be that the departure of Jesus from his disciples are intended to be the glory of the church?

[25 : 51] that essentially, that what is in store, we'll get more into that in like John 16, as Jesus forecasts what this change is going to look like.

He's got a lot of time to indicate what that change looks like, but we see that the departure of Judas is the means of Christ's glorification, the departure of Jesus is only the means of the church's glorification, and if the world sees our love, it's intended to bring glory to God, not to absorb it and boast ourselves, but to boast God's glory.

So, consider this as we're nearing our time here. Consider the place and the setting of the disciples. They're all seated in this current moment in the upper room, Judas is left, but could you even, just from that scene alone, could you imagine the darkness?

You know that moment when someone walks in the room that you really don't want to see? I mean, we could be honest, and it just changes, sometimes it's me, so I'm sorry about that, but it just changes the atmosphere, it changes the entire, the vibe within the community, and imagine them just witnessing the beginning of Judas' betrayal as the door shuts, just looking at one another, and then Jesus addresses them that things are going to change.

[27 : 27] Consider that context, because up ahead, according to their limited perception of what we know according to Scripture, they don't know what's up ahead.

They know somebody has just left. They know that Jesus has been predicting about the Son of Man, and according to what Scripture says about the Son of Man, that includes suffering, but it also includes glory.

These disciples are put in a place where they have to believe without seeing, to walk by faith and not by sight.

And so when Jesus Christ says, the world will know that you are my disciples if you love one another, this means their faith will be tested solely within and primarily through their community.

That there is going to be an interaction among the disciples between one another that is going to be vital in order to have their faith tested.

[28 : 35] All rooted in their faith. Today as a church, how can we be prepared for such a vital witness?

We can look at the world today and the sort of spiraling decay and depravity that seems to be out of control.

How can the church be prepared for such darkness? In our state in Ohio, we look upon our state and the rising concerns. We are within, in between a network of human trafficking.

People are, women are picked up on 80 and taken up to Dayton or taken out to Pittsburgh. I mean, we are right on the center of that problem. Pornography is an epidemic all across our nation and even within the church.

There's distortions in our state, even around the corner of sexuality. How can the church be prepared to witness? Looking upon our city, the poverty that exists, the needs, the ever so many needs of our community here in Youngstown, the homelessness, the rampant violence all around us.

[29 : 53] How can the church be prepared for such a witness? Well, Jesus makes it very clear that until our love abounds within the church, our righteous endeavors are futile to those around us.

A church void of love is void of the mission. A church void of love is no church at all. I'm really glad that we're painting now because this even ties in the illustration even more.

We can put a fresh coat of paint on our constructs. We can have the greatest programs that are available to the church around.

We could be doing the greatest things and making the biggest impact. We can beat those other churches for the Pregnancy Help Center Walk for Life. We can do it all.

But what does Paul say about all of these things without love? Maybe he was on to something. If our convictions are not rooted in love for one another, our love for God and neighbors will prove to be an absolute facade, period.

[31 : 11] Period. Period. Love for God and love for neighbors begins here. Let me read from Colossians 3, 12.

It says, put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved. Maybe I should slow down a bit. Compassionate hearts.

Compassionate hearts. Kindness. Kindness. Kindness. Humility. Meekness.

And patience. Bearing with one another. And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving one another.

As the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. And look what he puts here in verse 14.

[32 : 14] And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Not only our relationships here within, but our relationship with God is proven to have actually a cleansed heart attached to it and not just empty words.

Our service that comes through the church becomes one of self-sacrifice in order for God to be glorified. This is all good and all.

But let's go to our context here today at our church. Because an additional problem exists though. Love needs proximity.

Love needs proximity. Because we must be aware of adopting the cultural view that reduces the high-level importance of gathering as God's people physically.

[33 : 25] Because the Christian life is church life. That this is something that unites the church.

Because this, at this ground level, is the working out of our salvation. It's not done by working all these hours and neglecting to meet together.

It's not done by making excuses to not meet together. But what COVID specifically since 2020 has accomplished is the change in proximal nature of love.

That the church now has kind of been accustomed, and I know a lot of people are on the live stream, that could be at church, but they are not at church. And it's kind of made you comfortable of being a distant lover in context with the passage.

However, we must be reminded that this love is unable to be fully expressed within the context of this passage. It's unable to be fully witnessed in line with this passage to the world unless we are physically together.

[34 : 39] We can have as many viewers at the same time on a YouTube channel once a week, but that does not define the church. The church is the physical gathering of believers.

And the implications this will have upon the impact of our witness to the watching world will rise and fall upon the mutual love we have for one another.

And the mutual love we have for one another will rise and fall upon our conviction of whether we should gather or not. There's a lot at stake, and this is a loaded passage, and we could probably do a series on it in and of itself.

But consider the darkness of this day and the title of the sermon, the plumbing work.

I hope that we're reminded that we have to get this right as a church, that there are great implications that will testify to our love for God, our love for our neighbor, all rooted within this one command.

[35 : 49] And in the darkness of our day, may the newness of our love become a beacon of hope in the nowness of our dark day, just as it were for the disciples within their dark day.

Let's get this right and be challenged in this passage of what love looks like within the community of God and what that testifies to.

Let's pray.