

As we have worked our way through John's gospel we have seen how he has weaved the story together to give clues to Jesus' true identity, and that he has built up to this point where we come to the pivot point of the story. We have heard Jesus say that his time had come and then we saw last week that Judas decided to betray Jesus and, in order to reflect the darkness within Judas, John writes that he went out into the night.

But, as the door shuts there is a real sense of excitement that grips the story. John misses out something really significant from his story – there is no bread and wine section. We take our communion practice of sharing bread and wine from the other gospel accounts of the Last Supper, so why does John miss it out? It is likely because the practice was already established in the church as John is the last gospel to be written. We know that Paul taught about communion, so we assume it was the general practice. John is also writing with a different purpose, to show the concern that Jesus had for them, even in his hour of real torment.

In the room, it is almost as Jesus is drawing the remaining eleven closer, in order to tell them things that he couldn't say until Judas was gone. This next section is known as 'the farewell disclosures'. From this point on John explains that Jesus spoke of going away but they can't follow him yet. He tells them about heaven and how to get there, promises the Holy Spirit, talks about the need to be grafted into God, tells them they will be persecuted, and gives them a mission in the world. He ends up with the great prayer of chapter 17 before switching back to the story in Gethsemane.

These chapters are full of comfort, challenge, hope. Full of the kind of deep relationship that Jesus longs to have with each of his followers. They are full of deep theological insights explaining who God is and what he's doing in the world, and in us.

This is only the second time Jesus has talked about the Son of Man being glorified (12:23 in response to the Greeks who asked to meet him.) Before this he has spoken about God being glorified, and the

Son of Man being lifted up. Now he puts the two together, looking back to Daniel 7 ¹³ *In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man,^[a] coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

For John, the person Daniel saw in his dream was Jesus, coming on the clouds to the Ancient of Days, and the whole scene will be the moment of God's glory. The true God will be revealed, over against the dark forces that have been arrayed against him and his people. So, Jesus is glorified through his death, but as that was now assured the process had already begun. God is also glorified in Jesus, because he was obedient to his Father's will. The Father received glory from Christ and gives glory to Christ – vs 32 *If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.*

The words 'in himself' can mean 'in God' or 'in heaven'. They can also mean 'in Christ'. Whichever it is, Jesus is speaking about his death and resurrection.

He is also overwhelmed by the fact that he is going to have to leave the disciples behind. It has only been a few years and, as we've read the story, we realise how much they didn't understand. They saw the miracles and heard the teaching but they never seemed to really grasp what was happening. Of course, it's easy to be critical after the event but if someone told us that he was going to be 'lifted up', or 'going away where they couldn't follow' or going to 'his father' we wouldn't expect it to involve arrest and crucifixion – dead people don't usually go on to build a kingdom! It's easier when you know the outcome, but they didn't. They had all of that still to go through. How would they cope?

The next three chapters are where Jesus makes promises to them about the coming Holy Spirit who will continue to guide them, just as he had done. Holy Spirit still guides the people of God today. Before

that though he offers them the clearest, but perhaps the hardest, command to follow: Love one another.

Jesus describes it as a ‘new commandment’ but Leviticus 19 ¹⁸ *Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.*

John 13:34-35 *‘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.’*

So, it’s not that they haven’t heard it before. It’s not the words that are different, it’s the mode of this love that is new: love one another *in the same way that I have loved you*. It has been hard for the disciples to understand what Jesus had been doing on their behalf; now he’s telling them to copy him! As with the foot-washing, they are to look at his whole life, his whole way and manner of life, and to find in it a pattern, a shape, an example, a power. Love is all about the other person – that’s why, as an amazing display of love, Jesus was willing to wash their feet. Love naturally overflows into service and love is the badge that the Christian community wears before a watching world. As we read verse 35 we are bound to cringe in shame at the way in which professing Christians have treated each other down the years. We have turned the gospel into a weapon of our own various cultures. We have literally burned each other at the stake with it. We have defined ‘one another’ so tightly that it has come to mean ‘love the people who are like you, who obey the same rules and keep the same standards, and sing the same hymns. Image of divisions

What is supposed to happen is that people see our love for each other and are drawn to our fellowship. They will want to become part of the body of Christ and when they see our love for each other they will understand the depth of love Christ has for them. Our love for each other, all our brothers and sisters locally, should be a testimony to the love of Jesus.

I don't know if you have ever been in a situation where someone has told you something significant but you miss it and go back to something from earlier in the conversation? That's what Peter does here. He has missed this amazing command in verses 34-35 and goes back to verse 33 13:36 *Simon Peter asked him, 'Lord, where are you going?'*

Jesus and Peter talk away and Peter, with his usual bluster, says he'll lay down his life for Jesus. What a stinging reply, "Will you really?" Peter has forgotten what Jesus said about the Shepherd and the sheep. Peter has it the wrong way round entirely – Jesus lays down his life for Peter and for us.

We love Peter because he is like us, and we love Jesus because he is so gentle with Peter at times like this. Even with the sadness and challenge Jesus is patient. Yet again we see how, in the strange purposes of God, love and betrayal, glory and denial, go so closely together.