

The Full Extent of Love

John 13:1-17

Key Verse: 1b

“Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.”

Does anyone know what happened last Tuesday? It was Valentine’s Day. According to creditloan.com, Americans will spend an estimated \$17.6 billion on Valentine’s Day this year - that is the second highest grossing holiday, behind Christmas, and ahead of Mother’s Day, Halloween, and Easter. What do we celebrate on Valentine’s Day? Love. Since it’s the second grossing holiday this shows how much people long for love. Those who celebrated it were willing to spend an average of \$126 per person on love. However I wonder how many of those celebrating really showed the full extent of their love. Sadly most are left longing for true love because human love is often incomplete. However in our passage today Jesus shows us what true love really is. He does this by giving his disciples the full extent of his love.

Take a look at the first part of verse 1. “It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.” As it turns out this would be Jesus’ last Passover and the meal they were about to share would be his last. Jesus knew that his time had come and that he was going to die the next day. What would you do if you knew that this was your last meal? Some people have a thing called their “bucket list.” This is a list of things they would like to do before they kick the bucket, before they die. What would you do if you had 24 hours left to live? If you knew you were going to die tomorrow, what would you do today? Who would you be with? How would you spend your time? What would be the final memory that you’d give yourself before one of your friends betrays you and you’re murdered in a brutal, painful and public way? Jesus knew everything about his upcoming death and yet he chose to show his love to his disciples during the last few hours of his life. He was not selfish at all. He gave of himself to the end.

Verse 1 concludes, “Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.” Jesus loved all people. But his disciples were special. They were his close friends and his love for them was deep. For more than three year he spent all his time with them and now he was going to show them how much he loved them. I believe that this is an inclusive statement, meaning everything from this point on would be an example of just how much he loved them. Not only washing their feet but ultimately giving his life on the cross was the full extent of his love.

However even though there was so much love in the air not everything was delightful because an uninvited guest showed up to the meal. Verses 2-3 tell us, “The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.” We learn from the book of Job that the devil freely roams the world. And in fact he is the prince of this world with power and demons under his command. And somehow he infiltrated the disciples and lured Judas away so that he would betray his friend. Jesus knew what was going on. It was not a shock to Jesus that Judas was going to betray him. However, I imagine his betrayal was still very painful. Having someone as close to him like Judas betray him, how could it not hurt? And anytime Satan attacks it’s painful and this causes doubt. Doubt is one of Satan’s strongest weapons. So when Satan seduced Judas to betray Jesus the temptation was to doubt God’s love. But Jesus knew that his Father God loved him and put all things under his power. Nothing was going to happen that he didn’t want to happen. The Bible tells us that Jesus gave up his life willingly. No one took it from him.

Jesus’ love relationship with his father was so strong that he knew where he came from and where he was going. This gave him full confidence. When we don’t know where we came from, we have doubts about

our origin. When we don't know where we are going, we have doubts about our destination. When we have these doubts, we cannot act in confidence. When we do not have confidence it becomes hard to make decisions, have discernment, and to know which way to go. But because Jesus knew that his father loved him and sent him into the world with a purpose and the he would go back to his father, he could be decisive, courageous, strong and clear in his leadership. And when Judas betrayed him, it didn't knock him off his mission. Likewise, we have to know where we've come from. For this gives us a sense of identity. If we've come from God, then we belong to God. We are God's people. Also we have to know where we are going. If we know where we are going, then we don't have to worry about what happens in the world because our final destination is not here, it's in heaven. And if we get side tracked, or distracted we can get back on track. Like the GPS that says "re-calculating" we can reset and get back on track to reach our goal. But if we don't know where we are going, how can we re-calculate?

In verses 4-5 Jesus showed his love. "so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him." It says that Jesus showed his love. Our society has an incomplete definition of love. And I would go as far as to say that we have watered down, selfish and twisted the definition of love. For example we say "I love Adele's new song," or "I love a good meal," or "I would love a new dress." We use the word love randomly. So much so that it loses its meaning. I think love is very complex. And I am sure that I will do a good job of butchering it this morning. But I will try to explain it as I understand it. I believe that there are internal and external components of love. The internal part of love is how we feel about another person. It is how we see them, and it determines if we're going to accept them into our heart or not. If we don't really accept someone into our heart, then how can we really love them? I think that our society has grasped this part of love half way, meaning that we let those into our hearts that we want to let in. We love those who we like. Who we deem worthy of our love, then we can let them into our heart. But that is incomplete because how many people can actually reach that level. Not very many because as soon as someone does anything that we don't like, we cut them off and don't let them in.

The other part of love is the external part. This is how others know that they are loved. This is the action part of love. This is WHAT we do for them. If we don't show this side of love how can anyone know that we love them? Unless we show them that we do love them, they will never know it. However this part of love is risky because it requires that we open ourselves up. And this is when we can really get hurt. Why? Because when we open up, we are expecting a certain response and if we don't get the response that we want, we are hurt. So what happens is that we don't up because we are either afraid to, or too selfish to, or completely oblivious to it.

The world's view of love is incomplete if we don't marry both the internal and external components together. And we can go through life never knowing that we have an incomplete view of love. So we can do something for another person and never let them into our heart. We can help a homeless person by giving them some money but not really letting them into our heart. Or we can treasure another in our heart but never display our love to them. This last part is how I was when I was younger. I honestly thought love was how I felt about someone. I thought love was a feeling that I got in the pit of my stomach. So I used to think, sure I love my mother, but I would never tell her because I thought it was just a way I felt about another person and as a result I never did anything about it and my mom would never know that I love her. I still struggle with this to make sure that Julia knows that I love her.

In this passage Jesus shows the full extent of his love. Jesus shows what complete love looks like. Jesus shows true love – revealing both the internal and external components. First let's take the external component because that is the easiest thing to see. Here Jesus shows the disciples how much he loved them because he served them. He got up and did something for them. He put his love into action. Jesus made sure that his disciples KNEW how much he loved them. He didn't leave room for them to wonder

about it. When Jesus showed his love, he got up took off his robe and began to wash their feet. He went out of his way to make sure they knew that he loved them. First off he noticed that their feet were dirty. That is first step of love, to you pay attention and notice another person's need and the second step is help them. Often we don't pay attention to people's needs. So when we hear people's needs and we act spiritual but don't really meet their need. When someone is in financial need but instead of helping we say, "I'll pray for you brother," meanwhile they go hungry. I am not just talking about charity work. That is just a small part of it but it goes much deeper. What does it look like wash another's feet? All it is, is doing something for another. Do they need a ride, or help with their homework. Or just someone to listen to their problems. I remember at one international summer conference my sister invited one of her classmates from college to the conference. I was so happy and proud of my sister. That she brought her first "sheep" to a conference. But what I didn't realize is that it would be a lesson for me. Her class mate was handicapped and how things worked out, I was the one to room with him. I wasn't thrilled but thought I'll do it for the conference. But what I didn't realize what I got myself into because it went outside of my comfort zone. I got stuck pushing him around in his wheelchair. This was tough, everyone left us behind and I had to find all the handicap entrances. Then I had to sit next to him in the special locations. But what came next I was not ready for at all. I had to help him onto the toilet and wipe, I had to help him into and out of the shower. I had to help him get his underwear on. I was not ready for that. And I remember one point as clear as a picture, I was grumbling as I was tying his shoe. I was pissed and wondering why was I the one stuck doing this. And it struck me, my son David was young at the time and I didn't have a problem tying his shoe but I despised him as I tied his shoe. It was an eye opening experience for me.

Jesus also shows how he reveals the internal component of love. Imagine if you had a friend that for three years you fed, loved, taught, prayed with and generally cared for and they, for some unknown reason, despised you and decided that tomorrow they're going to participate in murdering you. And knowing all that, you still bring them over to your house the night before and you feed them, and washed their feet. Jesus' love goes beyond his human feeling. Dan told me that he doesn't mind sniffing his baby's butt to check if her diaper needs to be changed, but he was also quick to point out that he wouldn't want to go around sniffing anyone else's. Jesus shows the full extent of his love even to Judas who was going to betray him in the near future. However it was not only Judas, Peter would deny even knowing Jesus and all the disciples would abandon him. And yet Jesus knelt down and washed their feet.

Why in the world does Jesus wash Judas' feet, feed him, love him, care for him, when it is not going to make a bit of difference? Why would he do that? Jesus did this because he loved the Father. Jesus knew, "I'm not scrubbing Judas' feet for Judas. I'm scrubbing Judas' feet for the Father. Judas may never appreciate this. But the Father does. Judas may never show me any love, or kindness, or affection, but the Father does. Jesus was doing this out of love for the Father."

And that's the heart of humility. The heart of humility is not doing something because it's going to be successful, or because it's going to be a good return on my investment of time or emotion or energy or money. We do it because we love God whether or not anyone cares or even appreciates it. We do it because we love God, and God knows my heart. And that's why Jesus does it. And so, Jesus doesn't get bitter, like, "I've wasted my time and energy. No, I haven't. If I love God, and if I've done it for the glory of the Father, then my time was not a waste. My energy was not spent in vain. It did a good thing, and that was to honor the Father."

One of the classic examples of Christ's humility is found in Philippians 2, Paul says that our attitude should be the same as Christ, Jesus, who, though being in very nature was God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped or held on to. But instead, he emptied himself. He set aside his rights, and he humbled himself and he took on the form of a servant and a slave, all the way to the point of actually dying for us, because of his love. And that our attitude should be like his. Do you remember from

a couple of weeks ago from the passage where Mary washed Jesus' feet, I described how gross their feet could get disgusting. They're calloused, hardened, covered with dung and mud, they're just sick. Most guys, even in our culture with a daily shower and Fast Actin' Tinactin still have stinky, nasty feet. The last thing any guy wants to do is clean another guys feet. Not to mention that the foot washing duty was left to the lowest servant of the house. It's enough that God would come down from heaven and be one of us. That's humbling enough. But then, for God to come down as the lowest servant among us all, that's unthinkable. Going even further, not only did Jesus wash their feet, he also washed Judas' feet. Wow, Jesus' humility is so unbelievable.

The contrast to Jesus' humbleness is Peter's pride. When Jesus "...He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?""⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."⁸ "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."⁹ "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"¹⁰ Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." (v6-11) Jesus tells them that they didn't understand his concept of love. Probably because of their selfishness and desired to be loved. They couldn't understand why Jesus was doing what he did. Nobody can until they accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. The disciples would only understand later when they met Jesus after his death and resurrection. Peter rejected Jesus washing his feet because of his pride. There is something in us that makes us reject the help of others and strive to do it ourselves, to be self-sufficient. I'm not saying that's a bad quality, it's a good one but not in the spiritual sense. There something about us that when Jesus comes to clean us off, we don't want him to and we want to do it ourselves and take care of our own dirt. We want to do something to make ourselves righteous that's why accepting grace is so hard. However "Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." Unless we humble ourselves and receive the grace of Jesus, we can never be with him. Then Peter responds over the top, "Then, Lord, not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" (v9) I love fact the Peter is telling Jesus what to do. First he says no, then give me a full body bath.

Verses 12-17 conclude. "¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them."¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am."¹⁴ "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."¹⁵ "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."¹⁶ "I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him."¹⁷ "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

There is a strong connection between love and humility. Deep love is humble and self-less but shallow love is proud and selfish. Deep love gives it away while shallow love wants it for ourselves. If Jesus who is our Lord has done this and we are not greater than him, then we should follow his example. And Jesus gives us the example to follow and we will be blessed if we do it.