

The Call to Radical Love

John 13:18-35

The theme of radical love characterizes Jesus' teaching and actions in the upper room (John 13-17). After washing his disciples' feet (13:1-17), Jesus reaches out to a failing disciple (13:18-30), and then challenges his followers to demonstrate the same type of radical love (13:31-35). Jesus taught through example and command about the radical nature and necessity of this revolutionary type of love.

Jesus demonstrates radical love (18-30)

Jesus had just said that blessedness comes through obedience (17). Now he says that one of his disciples will not be blessed. Verse 18 stands in stark contrast to the preceding verse.

Jesus directed his words to those disciples who truly believed in him (18).

Choosing Judas to be one of his followers was not a mistake. It was a fulfillment of Psalm 41:9 (18). Jesus made this statement so that when the disciples would later remember his words, they would not think he had been mistaken about Judas (19). Instead, they would believe that Jesus was "I am" concerning his deity.

Since Jesus claimed to be "I am", the disciples needed to understand that they enjoyed an intimate relationship with Jesus as his messengers (20). Anyone who accepted them would be accepting Jesus, the One they represented, and in turn that person was also accepting the Father.

The prospect of imminent betrayal and death upset Jesus visibly (21). The Twelve were not sure what he was talking about (22).

John enjoyed a close relationship with Jesus (23). He was not claiming that Jesus loved him the best, but that he appreciated God's grace in loving him as he did.

Peter was somewhere across the table from Jesus. Since he could not privately ask Jesus what he meant, he signaled John to ask the question (24-25). Being closer, John could whisper the question quietly.

Jesus identified Judas as the betrayer to John (26). The host of the Passover dinner would typically dip a piece of unleavened bread into the bowl of paschal stew and give it to an honored guest. It was a sign of friendship. The apparent contradiction may explain John's lack of response to Jesus' words to him about the betrayer.

Judas accepted Jesus' food but not his love (27). Instead of repenting, Judas continued to resist, and his resistance opened the way for Satan to take control of him in a stronger way than he had done previously.

Knowing that his hour had come, Jesus told Judas to act quickly and not delay God's plan.

No one present knew what Jesus meant when he told Judas to act quickly (28). Since Judas had the money box and was the treasurer of the Twelve, they thought he was either making preparations for the Feast of Unleavened Bread which followed Passover or was giving gifts to the poor (29).

Judas obeyed Jesus' command and left immediately (30). He missed most of the meal, including the institution of the Lord's Supper. It was night, a foreboding statement about Judas' life, actions, and the events that would follow.

Jesus calls us to radical love (31-35)

Judas' departure signaled the beginning of the Son of Man's glorification (31). Jesus had a positive, albeit troubled, attitude towards the events that lay before him.

Jesus' glorification—crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, glorification in heaven—would mean glory to the Father, who would in return glorify the Son (32).

Glorification meant a temporary separation from his disciples (33). Jesus used a tender term, little children, to show his strong affection for them as members of his family.

Having announced their inevitable separation, Jesus now began to explain what he expected of his disciples during their absence from him (34). They were to "love one another" as "I have loved you."

This supernatural love distinguishes the true followers of Jesus (35).

Principles to Practice

Secret sin can leave you vulnerable to Satan.

Jesus calls us to demonstrate radical love.

The quality of our love reveals whether or not we truly follow Jesus.