

**Series:** Receiving life by believing in God's Son (a Gospel of John study)

**Sermon Text:** John 13:12-20

**Kids' Phrase:** Love One Another

(\*This account is also in Matthew 26:1-30; Mark 14:1-26; Luke 22:1-23)

John said he wrote this letter to help us find “*fullness of life through believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*” Chapters 1-12 contain 3 years of real-life stories where people met Jesus during His public ministry. Chapters 13-21 slow way down as Jesus began to reveal His (God's) heart to His disciples in the week leading up to the cross and resurrection.

- Last time, we dipped our toes into the introduction for the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of John's book. From *verses 1-11* we learned *Jesus is God's love in a body, there is no cleansing of sin without Him, He only needs to bathe us once*, and that *our standard is Jesus, not others*. We concluded that **keeping our eyes on Jesus keeps us from doubting God's love**. Such truths fill us with assurance and hope, but as we'll see in *verses 12-20*, they also prepare us to embrace this...

**BIG IDEA: Those loved by Jesus respond by loving His church.**

During what we call the “*The Last Supper*”, Jesus vividly revealed the heart of the Father and then... *Jesus explained how His love fuels love for His church.* (John 13:12-17)

- *Verses 12-15* tell us, *when he had washed their feet, put on his outer garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.* Some view this as a mandate for churches to practice literal foot washing, however we don't see it that way because Jesus said, *I have given you an example* (a figure or pattern cf. James 5:10; Hebrews 4:11), *that you also should do just as I have done to you.* The ceremony wasn't even about *washing feet*, right? It pointed to the cross and its meaning! While we can't repeat His once-for-all sacrifice, the more we *understand* all Jesus has done for us, the more we're transformed into His image--one who sacrifices themselves for others (cf. John 15:12-13). He is our Savior AND our *example!*
- Jesus chose a perfect backdrop for this lesson. Status and positions of honor were a big part of Jewish dinners, so guests were seated from *greatest* to *least*. He knew His disciples would be like children fighting for the front seat or like adults who see a need (e.g., trash on the floor, a cry for help) and think, “*someone else will get it*” or “*that's someone else's job.*” I mean, they all sat there knowing *feet* needed to be washed but were evidently too *great* (self-invested) to do the job! Luke (22:24-27 NLT) informs us they'd just been arguing “*about who would be the greatest among them. Jesus told them, 'In this world the kings and great men lord it over their*

people (boss people around) yet are called 'friends of the people.' But among you it will be different. Those who are greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant...For I'm among you as one who serves.” John omitted those details in **verses 16-17** to paint a powerful picture for us to gaze upon and become like--Jesus got up, humbly did what nobody wanted to, and declared, ***Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*** Christianity is beautifully simple...it's a ***blessing*** to ***understand*** our Savior, and even more so as faith compels us to follow His ***example***.

***So, what did Jesus say would become true of us after experiencing His limitless love?***

***#1: We learn to love church people like Jesus did.***

- At first glance, this passage isn't about ***loving*** the world, it's about ***loving one another***. It says that in **verse 1**, “*having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*” God has a special ***love*** for His church that surpasses His ***love*** of all creation (cf. Ephesians 1-2, 5). Galatians 6:10 beckons us to follow His ***example***, “*as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*” It seems the church is where we practice receiving and giving ***love***, and the way we're to ***love*** the world is by becoming a ***community of love***. Through practice, we learn to avoid pitfalls like 1) Becoming a closed off community. 2) Turning God's gospel into a prosperity formula (i.e., if I do x, then God will do y). 3) Superficially obeying His Law to earn His favor or market His cause. 4) This is the big danger...forgetting God's ***love*** always moves first. 1 John 4:19 says, “*we love because He first loved us.*” Not only is our ***love*** always a response to His, but His ***love*** is how we stay satisfied, motivated, and sustained as doing good makes us weary. Galatians 2:20 says it should feel like, “*I've been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*” Professor NT Wright said, “*Looking back, you may be startled by the joy of realizing that as you walked into that house, that hospital, that place of pain or love or sorrow or hope, Jesus was walking in, wearing your skin, speaking in your tone of voice.*” This is what Jesus modeled for us, right? He was God walking around in a body, and according to **verses 1-5**, His ability to ***love to the end*** was grounded in who He was to the Father and who the Father was to Him. We

need this image in mind as we choke out the last part of our sentence... ***Those who experience the limitless love of Jesus learn to love church people like Jesus did,***

#2: ...***even if they turn out like Judas.***

- Who finds church people to be difficult, risky, and painful to ***love***? Looking back through the eyes of John and Jesus, words like “*easy, romantic, or feel good*” can’t be said of this evening filled with confusion, resistance, humiliation, and betrayal. In ***verses 18-19*** Jesus said, “***I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.***” I should’ve taken His warning more seriously! In 30 years of ministry, I’ve found the church to be more like the Last Supper than a Hallmark movie. My young, naïve self was blindsided to discover my deepest hurts will come from those I invest in most. It’s a double-edged sword--you can’t ***love*** well if you hold back, but “going all in” exposes you to the most hurt. A local church, by definition, is a sanctuary (refuge) for hurting and broken people seeking 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 490<sup>th</sup> chances at mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Naturally, some who receive baptism and communion will turn out like ***Judas*** by failing to embrace the meaning and the person behind all we do. Some who do life with us will betray us and prove their faith was never real. We can’t know who, but Jesus does. In fact, He did, and despite knowing Judas would betray Him in the worst way possible, Jesus still ***washed*** his ***feet*** alongside the others! Anyone ever catch yourself saying, “*Well, they MAY be deceiving us or MIGHT abuse our gifts*”? Jesus obliterates our excuses in ***verse 20***, “***Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the Father who sent me.***” Ever watched someone walk into church and think, “*What are THEY doing here?*” Um, Jesus sent them! Nothing else should matter, right? To ***receive*** them into our church family is to welcome Jesus (cf. Matthew 25:31-46)! We’re being invited to partner with Him--to ***love*** Him by ***loving*** them, so radically and selflessly that people will be shocked and appalled like Peter (and Judas?) was! We’re NEVER sure how our ***love*** will land in someone’s life, but we’re ALWAYS certain Jesus is in us and saying, “*Go ahead, take the risks I took, I’ve got this, and I’ve got you to the very end.*”

- Ask the average Christian why their church isn't growing, and they're likely to blame it on the pastor, boring music, or bad programs. However, according to 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 John 4, the church's greatest problem is our lack of *love*! Churches aren't growing because we're not caring for those we already have. When people walk through our doors, it shouldn't take long for them to start thinking, "*These people really love and put their lives on hold for each other*" Again, in Luke 22 Jesus said, "*Among you it will be different!*" So, are we? Or are people more likely to walk in and experience what get everywhere else...no space to share their struggles because we're too caught up in ourselves and droning on about temporal nonsense?
- So, our assignment is simple! Look around. These are your people...*love* them like Jesus *loves* you! Whatever lengths would you go to for your natural family (Phileo)? Love (Agape) *one another* like that. If you notice we're caught up in sin, restore us in a spirit of gentleness. Make space on your calendar, so you're not too busy to see our heavy loads and help us bear them (cf. Galatians 6). Have you raised kids? I have! Let's quit saying, "*I did my time*" and become spiritual parents and grandparents to our young families. Who might benefit from an extra set of hands during Sunday worship or an experienced guru walking with you during the week? Jesus said, *I have given you an example* (pattern), *that you also should do just as I have done to you.* And *verse 35* says it's the only way people will know we're His disciples!

### Let's pray:

- Father, so many of us want to be "*world changers*", while undervaluing and skipping over the people you've put in our lives to shape us. The path to "*changing the world*" starts by as we learn to *love* your church. Where else can we learn patience and kindness; to stop our jealousy, boasting, arrogance, rudeness, insistence on our way, irritability, resentment of others, and fixating on wrongdoing? Nowhere else are we reminded to rejoice in truth, to bear with others, to believe Jesus changes people, to be hopeful, and to endure! Certainly, Jesus didn't live and die for us to become like those grumpy Muppets who look down on everyone from esteemed balconies wondering, "*When will this be over?*" and "*When can we leave?*" He wants us to be different--to realize what some churches miss--that the world changes incrementally as we are changed into the community He sacrificed to create. Jesus, while it's taken over 30 years, I'm thankful that you haven't given up on us and are bringing more of us on board with your plan. If it's your will, we welcome you to keep that up. Amen.

**Let's sing:** Please stand and join us as we sing about our HERO, Jesus Christ!

So, what's your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

### Quotes/Additional thoughts:

- **Foot Washing:** “With the exception of 1 Timothy 5:10 there is no other New Testament reference to it, and there the reference appears social rather than sacramental.” Professor Bruce Milne
- **An example for us:** “The word he uses could mean, in the ancient world, a picture showing how something was to be done, a tracing that someone else would follow, filling in the details. And this pattern sets Jesus’ followers a task so laborious, requiring such a strain not only on the eyes but also on the nerves, will, heart and energy, that we shouldn’t be surprised at how many of us fail to get it right.” Professor NT Wright
- **No job too little or too great:** A Christlike leader is known by the ease and spontaneity with which he or she does the little, annoying, messy things – the things which in the ancient world the slave would do, the things which in our world we always secretly hope someone else will do so we won’t have to waste our time, to demean ourselves. We’re ready to take on insignificant roles if that’s what God wants...the picture of foot washing is meant to serve not only as a picture of all sorts of menial tasks that we may be called to perform, without drawing attention to them. It also points towards the much larger challenge, the challenge that Jesus issued to Peter in the last chapter of the book, the challenge to follow Jesus all the way to the cross, to lay down life itself in the service of God and the world he came to save.” Professor NT Wright
- **Humility:** Professor Bruce Milne said, “Humility is a universal Christian virtue to be expressed through sincere and costly service of others in Christ’s name. Christian churches and fellowships are possible only where this attitude is expressed. In a world desperately searching for the secret of community this passage speaks most powerfully.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll also said, “Humility doesn’t discriminate; humility is expressed equally to all...most of us would stand in line to wash the Savior’s feet because He’s worthy! But how many are ready to wash the feet of another person in the church, particularly someone we don’t like very much? Humility turns the structure of authority upside down. Humility is an action, not simply an attitude. One does not feel humble or think humble thoughts. Humility is unannounced. Jesus didn’t rise from the table and boldly announce, ‘I am now going to demonstrate humility.’ Humility is being willing to receive service without embarrassment. Humility is not a sign of weakness...Jesus did not serve His disciples because He was weak, or needed their goodwill, or desired their approval, or coveted their loyalty. Humility does not discriminate. Humility includes serving one another, not just the Lord.”
- **It matters what story we believe:** The question is, as it always has been, “*Which story are you buying into...the utilitarian version where you’re just a pawn who recruits other pawns; or God’s story where, before you ever get started, you’re loved and valued as much as you’ll ever be?*” In one story, people are either become competition or objects to use as we see fit. God’s story levels the playing field and inspires us to freely love others. When we trust the story, we become willing to lay down our lives on behalf of others.
- **Keeping the story straight:** It’s nonsense to claim membership in God’s family if what occurred in the upper room is not disrupting our lives. Are you aware that salvation is more

than a personal relationship that exists between you and Jesus by grace through faith? While salvation unites us with Jesus, it also unites us with a wonderful family referred to as, “*His church*” or “*His body*.” Why then, do churches emphasize the “*personal relationship*” to the neglect of the “*family relationship*”? Many churches harp on individuals “*getting saved*” and then “*telling their friends*”, which in my opinion, is no different than inviting someone into a social club or multi-level marketing scheme where everyone gets points and status for being a top recruiter, and people are valued for their production and commitment to the organization. The gospel invites us into something entirely different--a relationship with God, where our value isn't based on what we produce. In fact, we're invited, like Adam and Eve were, to REST in God's finished work and to FREELY enjoy an unearned inheritance and the people we get to share it with. See the difference? If we want people to view Sundays as more than a day to sleep in, watch football, get paid time and a half, or do whatever else, then we need to keep our story straight!

- **We do need the church to be a Christian:** What proves we're grasping the full extent to which Jesus loves us? When His love motivates us to love others in His church (body). And there it is--the thing people hate or at least try to deny about Christianity--we do, in fact, need the church to be a Christian! 1 John 4:19-21 reminds us that “*We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*” Have you ever had someone say, “*Your kids are so helpful when they come to my house*”, only to think, “*Why are they like that at home?*” It shouldn't be that way. God hasn't called us to be “*do-gooders*” who pick and choose who we love or to do acts of love for recognition. Anyone can do that! Our challenge is to love those who reside under our proud noses--the ones who annoy us, are always around, and who we know all their dirty secrets. Anyone can love strangers that haven't hurt us deeply, but only those who have been fully known and fully loved by a God we've deeply offended to inspire us to love like Jesus did.
- **We're to be different:** “There are many places you can go to find people just like yourself, who live for sports or music or gardening or politics. But it is the mandate of the church to become a community of love, a circle of Christ's followers who invest in one another because Christ has invested in them, who exhibit love not based on the mutuality and attractiveness of its members, but on the model of Christ, who washed the feet of everyone (including Judas). Professor Gary Burge
- **Our mission:** We're never to equate one's worth with what they can produce or do for us, so our hearts are always open to those in need. God's *love* compels us to move towards the broken, the hurting, thieves like Judas, and murderers like Paul, regardless of the outcome or no matter what label we're given for doing so. Chapters 3 and 12 taught us that truth is their final judge, which frees us to be the church, not the court system--to put off suspicion, conspiracies, polarized politics, canceling, hatred, vengeance, or anything that further fractures relationships. Imagine how people might flock to churches if they heard we're more like that...a people of restoration who are willing to take the lesser role to benefit them!

**Contextual items:**

- **Change of focus in Chapter 13:** “This section signals a change of focus as Jesus turns to ‘his own’ and shows them his love...In the end there is no explanation of the cross other than the love of God. There can be no other, for we certainly do not deserve it and can never earn it.” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **The heart of God:** “Here, in five chapters (13-17), in only 155 verses, and in less than four thousand words we are given what the Puritan writer Thomas Goodwin called “‘a window into Christ’s heart.’” Professor Sinclair Ferguson
- **Book Context:** The Gospel of the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, provides a clearly stated purpose. *John 20:30-31* says, “*Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*” Some people demand to have all their questions satisfied before bowing to Jesus, yet John claimed his limited account was enough to bring anyone to faith. As we read it, our Savior and friend emerges from the pages as a real person in the real world. Jesus shows us what we could become, if we too would rely on His infinite Father who will gladly supply whatever we need.
- **Life in his name:** Life is the Greek word, “zōē”, which means “Life, Living, Lifetime, Life-Giving” and is where we get the word, “zoology” in English. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says it's “used in the NT of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it, that which the Father has in Himself, and which He gave to the Incarnate Son to have in Himself, Jhn 5:26, and which the Son manifested in the world, 1Jo 1:2. From this life man has become alienated in consequence of the Fall, Eph 4:18, and of this life men become partakers through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Jhn 3:15, who becomes its Author to all such as trust in Him, Act 3:15, and who is therefore said to be 'the life' of the believer, Col 3:4, for the life that He gives He maintains, Jhn 6:35, 63. Eternal life is the present actual possession of the believer because of his relationship with Christ, Jhn 5:24; 1Jo 3:14, and that it will one day extend its domain to the sphere of the body is assured by the Resurrection of Christ, 2Cr 5:4; 2Ti 1:10. This life is not merely a principle of power and mobility, however, for it has moral associations which are inseparable from it, as of holiness and righteousness. Death and sin, life and holiness, are frequently contrasted in the Scriptures.”

### **Other Articles/Songs/Videos:**

#### **Helpful thoughts for discussion leaders:**

1. Go for a single, not a home run...don't drag the night out; realize more people = less deep sharing.
2. Keep discussion around 30mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.

### **Challenge Questions**

*Review the BIG IDEA: Those loved by Jesus respond by loving His church.*

**-Simple questions...**What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

### **Preparation questions for John 13:12-20.**

- What questions do you have about this passage?
- What stands out to you as strange or amazing in this passage?

- What do you think Jesus was driving at, and what does that imply about your relationship with Him?

### **Application questions from John 13:12-20.**

- How have things like pride, status, or laziness kept you from loving other believers to the end? What can we learn about humility, service, self-sacrifice, and endurance by pondering Jesus' mindset (13:1-5), the foot washing, and the cross? How does believing Jesus is at work within you and in others motivate you to go beyond "The Golden Rule" to give yourself to them like Jesus has for you?
- Are you willing to share with us how "*going all in*" has hurt you deeply? Is there anything you learned from that experience that could help us love others better? How does it help you to see how Jesus treated the guy He knew would betray Him in the worst possible way?
- Is there margin in your life or is your schedule too full (Are you passing time or redeeming it)? What needs have you noticed within our church family (who have you seen carrying a load that's a bit too heavy) that you could help bear it? What will it take to make that happen?

### **Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...**

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded)

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://toddestrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://toddestrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>