

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 10/24/93  
John 13:31-35 "The Standard for Servants"

**Intro:**

Last week, one of the great pastors of the 20th century went to be with the Lord, Howard Sugden. Warren Wiersbe said he knew Sugden to pray, "Lord, please don't let me add to anybody else's problems."

Earlier this month I received a letter from Willard Stull with the following prayer enclosed. "Lord, Thou knowest better than I know that I am growing older. Keep me from getting to talkative..."

There is a great need for servants in our day. A servant is a person who lives with his eyes on God and others, instead of self. Our text this morning is John 13:31-35. We come to week 5 in a series we have entitled, "Called to be Servants."

The setting for John 13 is an upper room in Jerusalem, the night of Jesus' betrayal, and just a few short hours before His trial and execution. We've said it before, but it merits repeating. What happened in the upper room that night changed the world forever.

First, Jesus gave His followers an Example, an example of love (1). He exemplified love when He got up from his pallet, and washed their feet (4-5). The Master became a servant. He humbled Himself. Later after the meal resumed, He exemplified love again. He took the sop, dipped it in the dish, and gave it to the one He knew would betray Him, Judas. I would remind you that the giving of the sop was culturally an act of honor and friendship. When Jesus extended His arm to present the morsel to Judas, He was offering Him love. But Judas snubbed Jesus' offer.

Jesus began the chapter by giving His disciples an Example of love. He concluded the chapter with an Exhortation to love. He gave them a new commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you." (34)

Friends, right there is the Standard for Servants. It's a high standard, for it's a standard which beckons us to follow in His steps.

Illust: Last Friday a man came by the church named Jesse...

Q: What does it really mean to love someone? And why is it so important that as Christians we love each other? We'll see this morning.

**Proposition: In John 13:31-35, our Lord spells out for us the standard He has set for servants. He tells us what He expects of us as His followers.**

I. The Context (31-33)

A. It was a serious moment.

1. Judas was gone (31).
2. Jesus would soon be gone (33).

B. It was a significant moment.

1. The Son was going to glorify God the Father (31).
2. God the Father was going to glorify the Son (32).

## II. The Commandment (34-35)

- A. There is a Responsibility involved in love (34a).
- B. There is a Resemblance involved in true love (34b).
- C. There are Results produced by true love (35).

## I. The Context (31-33)

There are 2 important factors to notice about the context.

### A. It was a serious moment.

It was serious for 2 reasons.

#### *1. Judas was gone (31).*

V 31 "Therefore when he was gone out."

Judas was gone. The showdown was over. The assembly was now pure. The pretender had removed himself (I Jn 2:19 "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for it they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us...")

As soon as Judas left, Jesus shared the standard for servants with His disciples. Why did He wait? What Jesus was about to say was not for pretenders. It was for His own, for those who truly loved Him. Do you know why? How can a person who does not have a genuine love for God have a genuine love for the people of God? He can't.

#### *2. Jesus would soon be gone (33).*

V 33 "Little children, yet a little while I will be with you..."

"Little children." This is the only time Jesus used this in the gospels. It's a term of affection. It's a term designed to brace them for what would on the surface be very sobering news. In just a little while, He was leaving them. And they couldn't come with Him. Granted, He had told them this before, but it didn't seem comprehensible. Jesus would soon be gone.

Note: There's an important difference between what Jesus told disciples that night, and what He had told the unbelieving Jews earlier. Jn 7:33-34 "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find me; and where I am, there YE CANNOT COME." Then in Jn 8:21 "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall DIE IN YOUR SINS; where I go, ye cannot come." Because of their sins, the unbelieving Jews could not come to the place to which Jesus was going. The disciples could and would (see 14:3)

### B. It was a significant moment.

There's one key word which points to the significance of the moment. It's a word Jesus used 5 times in 2 verses--"glorify." The context was significant for 2 reasons.

#### *1. The Son was going to glorify God the Father (31).*

V 31b "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him."

#### *2. God the Father was going to glorify the Son (32).*

V 32 "If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him..." (future tense)

To the natural man, what happened that night was anything but glorious. The One who brought hope to the world was betrayed by one of His trusted followers. He was subjected to the mockery of a night, kangaroo court. Witnesses lied about Him. Self-seeking leaders unjustly sentenced Him. Cruel soldiers executed Him. The disciples abandoned Him. The crowds mocked Him.

That doesn't seem like glory, does it? Yet Jesus said it was. In anticipating the upcoming events of His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus said in v 31, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him."

From the human perspective, Jesus' death was an atrocity. But from the divine perspective, it was the revelation of the glory of God. Jn 12:23 "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified."

Q: Do you know why it was glory?

What does it mean to "glorify" God? Wiersbe says this, "To glorify means simply to make to look good." That's what Jesus did. He came to do His Father's will, to make Him look good. That's why He went to the cross.

Later that same night, Jesus made an amazing claim in Jn 17:4, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." How did He do it? "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." It was the Father's will that Jesus die for sinners, conquer death, and return to heaven. Jesus did just that, and so glorified His Father.

That's how we glorify God too, by faithfully doing what He has called us to do.

Illust:

So Jesus announced He was leaving His followers. That could have led to trouble. Parents, when was the last time you left your children at home alone? What did you do before you left? You probably told your kids what you expected of them while you were away, didn't you? That's exactly what Jesus did next.

Q: What does Jesus expect of His followers while He is away?

## **II. The Commandment (34-35)**

Vv 34-35 "A new commandment..."

These are 2 of the most familiar words in Scripture. And so should they be! We ought to be well acquainted with these hallmark words of our Lord. Why? Well, for starters, Jesus didn't say, "A new suggestion I give unto you." No, He gave us a commandment, an order. This isn't a "take it or leave it" matter.

You say, "Why does He say it's a NEW commandment? Didn't God expect His people to love before this? Certainly. And didn't He already command them to love? That's right. Lev 19:18 "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." That was in the Mosaic law. Love itself is not a new commandment, but an old one.

Q: What then did Jesus mean when He said, "A NEW commandment I give?"

A: The word "new" does not mean "new in time." It means "new in experience, fresh." It's the opposite of being worn out (Wiersbe, 349). Jesus gave a brand new meaning to love at the Cross. And when He sent His Spirit at Pentecost, He gave His people a brand new capacity to love. Jesus elevated love.

Notice 3 lessons about love Jesus communicated to us here. You can remember these lessons by filling in the blanks on your handout with 3 words beginning with "R".

A. There is a Responsibility involved in love (34a).

V 34 "...that ye love one another."

Notice the responsibility. It's true that the Bible teaches that we are to love all people. Jesus announced that the Law is summed up by 2 great commands: Love God, and Love your neighbor (Mk 12:30-31). Elsewhere He commanded us to love even our enemies (Mt 5:44). But in John 13, Jesus has something much more specific in mind. That's what's new and fresh about this command.

2000 years ago, Jesus created a new brotherhood, a new society, a new people. It's known as the Church. The Church is not merely an institution or organization. The Church is a Family. In fact, it's the family of God. Members of this family have an intimate and unique relationship, not only with God, but also with each other.

Let that sink in. When Jesus spoke about love in v 34, He didn't give us abstract words about loving humanity. He spelled out in clear terms WHO we are to love.

Q: Who are we responsible to love? We are to love ONE ANOTHER. If you are my brother in Christ, I have a specific responsibility to you.

I chuckled when I heard Wiersbe say, "It took me 15 years to learn that God blesses others I disagree with." Let's face it. Christians are different. We look different. We have different interests and abilities. But we have one and the same responsibility, "Love one another."

Love is to be the glue that bonds us together as the people of God.

Eph 5:2 "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and given Himself for us..."

Eph 4:15-16 "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things..."

Listen. The church that doesn't love doesn't grow. Interpersonal relationships are NOT optional.

Q: What does it mean to love?

The word is agape. Agape love has to do with my will. When I love someone with agape love, it means I make a decision to do what is right towards the other person.

Many years later the apostle John penned these words in I Jn 3:14-17, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death..."

There is a Responsibility involved in love.

B. There is a Resemblance involved in true love (34b).

V 34 "as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

Ponder that for a moment. The way we love each other should resemble the way Christ loved us. How did Christ love us? He loved us selflessly. He never

thought of Himself. He never sought His own pleasure. His sole aim in life was to please God and to help others.

Here's the difference between human love and agape love. In human love, we think about self. Even in the most noble expressions of human love, we think about what we're going to get. We calculate. If I do this, what will I get out of it?

Illust:

Agape love is totally selfless. Jesus never thought of Himself. His love for us was costly. His love for us was sacrificial.

Here's what's amazing. He says to us as His followers, "You are to love each other the same way I have loved you!"

Q: Do you know what that means? We can never love each other too much! Husbands, you can never love your wife too much. Wives, you can never love your husband too much. The same goes in the church. Look at the person in the pew in front of you. You can never love that person too much!

We are to love each other the way Christ loved us.

See: I Cor 13:4-7 "Love suffers long, and is kind. Love envies not; Love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up..."

Poem: Hendriksen, 254

Tran: True love involves a Responsibility. And a Resemblance.

### C. There are Results produced by true love (35).

V 35 "By this shall all men know..."

The words "by this" are emphatic. What mark did Jesus say should set us apart from the world? Our dress? No. The creed we recite? No. Our ritual? No. Our love? Yes.

In the later part of the 2nd century, the church leader Tertullian (2nd century) quoted what the pagans were saying about the church. Do you know what he said the world was saying about the Christians? "See how they love one another?"

Jesus said that true love would produce great results.

Q: Why is the American church today having a stifled affect on the world?

Could it be because the church has a breakdown in its "love life?" Does this community see Christ's love exhibited in us? Do they know that we love each other?

Listen. The world is not impressed with show and pizzazz. It's not impressed with our programs and big buildings and political sway and clout and entertainment. It has all of that. What it doesn't have and desperately needs is love.

Love is a magnet that draws steely hearts to Christ.

It disturbs me to read the current articles and books on the subject of church growth. I compare the strategies I read on how to reach non-churched people with what Jesus said here.

Q: How did Jesus say we could impact lost people, guarenteed?

A: By letting them SEE that we love each other.

Illust: The early church thrived because it took seriously its responsibility to love one another. READ Acts 4:32-35 "And the multitude of those that believed were of one heart and of one soul..."

We've got a problem today. The brand of Christianity being promoted in our day is self-centered and ingrown. Our culture is consumer oriented, and many Christians are not much different.

An article in the May 1987 issue of Psychology Today revealed some pretty amazing statistics. The article was entitled "The One Who Has the Most Toys When He Dies, Wins." The study revealed that more than 70% of college freshmen said that a major reason for attending college was "to be able to make more money." Those numbers are up nearly a third in the past ten years. (Morley, 14)

You say, "Well that's the world. Surely Christian young people are different." Really? I'm amazed at how many young people (and parents) choose vocations based on which one pays the most.

This past week I heard Larry Burkett share a staggering statistic. "The average evangelical Christian gives 5 times as much yearly to credit institutions for interest debt (credit card interest, car interest, etc--Just the interest!) as he gives to the Lord through the local church!

How can that be? In his book The Man in the Mirror, Patrick Morley hit the nail on the head when he wrote, "Today men are consumed by desires to buy things they don't need, with money they don't have, to impress people they don't like." (9)

And all the while Jesus' words remain ignored, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples..." Responsibility. Resemblance. Results.

### **Conclusion:**

Q: What are you doing FOR OTHERS, namely for your fellow disciples?  
Our Lord calls us to be servants.

We've got a choice to make. We need to choose to stop living with our eyes on ourselves, and start living with our eyes on others.

Illust: