

HOLY WEEK

WEEK 1: PASSOVER WEEK

David might agree that Christmas and Easter are the two occasions when you wonder what more can be said about the events that occurred. At least David has the consolation that probably no one has remembered what he preached about 10 or 15 years ago. Well, I'm going to start by saying two things that you might remember I have said before. First, David and I don't coordinate what we do in Bible studies, yet each time I follow David I have found that he has given either a background or an introduction to what I've already prepared to speak about. This time is no exception, for what was highlighted in Philippians was Paul's attitude, his frame of mind and his joy in his commitment to the gospel in spite of imprisonment. Also, his exhortation to have the same attitude of Jesus who left aside His glory and, in the words of the writer to the Hebrews "for the joy that was set before Him" endured death on a cross.

The second thing that I've mentioned it before is that the mind of Jesus' which gave Him such composure, self-control, dedicated obedience and single-mindedness to go through the humiliation and agony of crucifixion, never ceases to astound me - and Easter is the time when that comes particularly to the fore. What other person of flesh and blood could face such a traumatic experience in this way? An experience made even more harrowing by the fact that, literally, the eternal fate of the world, rested on His shoulders. And Jesus was fully aware of all that that entailed. What struck me from David's talks was that these Lenten talks, centred on John chapters 12-17 are indeed special, because they give us an insight into Jesus' whole approach to His impending death. In John, we find the fullest account of what was in His heart and mind and the strength of His commitment to His mission. And, if anything, we see a Jesus who was functioning in an even more profound and inspiring level right up to the hours preceding His ordeal. But this commitment was evident even before Passover week. This talk is about Jesus' determination to go to Jerusalem, already knowing that, because of the opposition and harassment He had already experienced from the authorities, He would die there.

Having said that, we first have to notice that what John records of Passover week is completely different from the other gospels. Reading through the evangelists' accounts of the events leading to the crucifixion, we find that Matthew, Mark and Luke give us the basic details. Luke gives more details of what Jesus taught in the days after His entry into Jerusalem. When we come to the gospel of John, however, we find details not mentioned in the other gospels, the most obvious of which, is no mention of the inauguration of the Lord's Supper. It is obvious from chapter 13 in John that a meal is in progress, but by the time John was writing his gospel the sacrament would have been established in church practice for 60 years or so. Consequently, John's audience would not have needed any further information about it. It seems that John, after many more years of recalling Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension and meditating about them realised there were other details about these milestones that a more mature and growing church needed to know. What we cover in these six weeks, however, is only a small fraction of the spiritual teaching in these chapters. We can see why from two different viewpoints.

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First, of the 21 chapters, eleven are devoted to introducing his gospel and Jesus' three year ministry; 6 chapters are given to the week preceding Jesus' death; and four chapters cover the 6 weeks between arrest and ascension. So, these 6 chapters are the closest we come to knowing and understanding the Person and the ministry of Jesus during that week. When we come to chapters 12 to 17 we find an even more startling timeframe. Chapter 12 covers a period from a few days before Jesus enters Jerusalem and Passover week up to the time He and His disciples enter the upper room to partake of the Passover feast (John 13:1). That means that 5 chapters are devoted to approximately the last 6 hours of Jesus' life as a free Man. This is based on the consensus that the Passover meal would begin around sunset - about 6pm. We are told that Judas left during the meal when it was already night and it is estimated that Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane sometime around midnight. Given that His ordeal was only hours away, how Jesus taught and prayed, I hope you'll agree, goes beyond astounding.

Secondly, a further illustration of this is what has been said about the 26 verses of chapter 17.

Newton and Manton were Puritans. Newton was ejected from the Church of England in 1662 under the Act of Uniformity because he would not conform to the teachings and practices of that church. Manton was, for a time, chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. Rainsford was an Irish preacher, graduate of Trinity College, Dublin who collaborated with D.L. Moody and Ira Sankey when they conducted their evangelistic campaigns in London. And I don't think I need to tell anyone here who Dr Lloyd-Jones is.

George Newton	1602-1681	56 sermons
Thomas Manton	1620-1677	45 sermons
Marcus Rainsford	1820-1897	41 sermons
Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones		48 sermons during 1952-53

Just these facts about one chapter illustrates the spiritual depth of what Jesus taught and prayed. His whole character is laid bare at the most traumatic time of His life. We need to pay close attention to them for John has given us the reason.

John 20:31

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

He also states

John 20:30

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

John 21:25

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

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And this strongly implies that what was written about Passover Week was of greater importance than the many other things he could have included in his work.

Because John also states in 21:24 that what has been written down is **a true testimony**, we can turn with confidence to the Gospel.

One thing that John does not let us forget is that Passover week was the culmination of the type of pressure Jesus had been under during His whole ministry, which intensified in the week leading to His crucifixion. Whereas the other Gospels gives us details of events in Jesus' journeys throughout Palestine - Galilee, Judaea, Samaria, the Decapolis and visits to Jerusalem, John's clear focus is on Jerusalem. It is almost as if John defines Jesus' three year ministry in terms of visits to the city. For John, Jerusalem is the setting of the greatest tragedy in the whole of human history, but also the scene of the greatest triumph in human history. This can be seen in the fact that while John does mention Jesus' journeys, some are made because of the threat coming from Judaea, where Jerusalem is situated.

We cannot be dogmatic about it but, In the first place, John would have known, as an eye witness, and would have been reminded by previous Gospels, about Jesus' own views on the city, for His fate and destiny would be decided in a city He cared deeply about.

Matthew 20:17

See we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and the third day he will be raised.

Matthew 23:37

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing.

Luke 19:41

And as he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes...."

Jesus was acutely aware that Jerusalem killed prophets and three times during His ministry prophesied His own death there. These facts did not diminish in any shape or form His compassion and sorrow for the fate of the city and for those who had rejected Him there. John would have known from travelling to Jerusalem with Jesus that the danger was increasing with each visit. The fact that the religious authorities were even monitoring and challenging Jesus' words, actions and credentials during His Galilean ministry indicated that they regarded Him as a threat to their own authority and were determined to put a stop to His ministry.

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Mark 3:22

And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed By Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

Mark 7:11

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were unclean.

Luke 20:22-25

Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not? He saw through their duplicity.....Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s. They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public...

And spies were sent by the teachers of the law and the chief priests to ask the dangerous and politically loaded question designed to entrap Him “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?” Had He said ‘No’ He would have been arrested and accused of inciting rebellion. Had He said ‘Yes’ , He would have lost much popular support. Yet, one of the lies told at His trial was that He had said it was unlawful to pay taxes to Caesar.

Just these examples of the challenges posed by the authorities lead John to make very clear, that although public opinion about Jesus was very sharply divided, the religious establishment was His harshest and most persistent critic. Particularly so because many ordinary people were believing in Him.

John 2:23

Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name.

Chapter 3 tells us that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and it is likely that he did believe because we are told in chapter 7:50 that Nicodemus tried to defend Jesus and was ridiculed for it. Then chapter 4 gives us His acceptance in Sychar, the town in Samaria, as a result of the encounter with the woman at the well. According to John, the only reason that Jesus was in that vicinity was because the Pharisees were looking for Him and He had decided to leave Judaea and head back to Galilee via Samaria. And it was because of this that the Jewish religious authorities became increasingly alarmed.

John 4:1-3

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptising more disciples than John.....When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

From then on the threat to Jesus’ life intensifies. Three events in particular aroused the fury of the religious authorities. The first in chapter 2 was the cleansing of the Temple. John puts this happening at the first visit, whereas the other Gospels put it at the last one. Again, regardless of when Jesus actually did it, the fact that He did it would have been

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like a red rag to a bull as far as the Temple authorities were concerned. Temple centred feasts were not just religious events, they were ‘big business’ and those who ran the Temple activities profited from them. What came to the disciples’ minds at the time was the words of

Psalm 69:9

Zeal for your house will consume me.

On that occasion, it was not Jesus’ action that was condemned. His authority to take it was questioned by a demand for a sign. The Jews believed signs and wonders would authenticate Messiahship, but later John states that in spite of the signs and wonders Jesus did perform, unbelief persisted and opposition grew stronger. We have evidence for this in chapter 5 with the healing of the paralysed man at the pool of Bethesda. The man was condemned by the Pharisees for carrying his mat on the Sabbath and later, when he had told them who had healed him, they were incensed. Not only had Jesus flagrantly and so publicly, broken the Sabbath in spite of all the religious prohibitions in place, He also explicitly told them He and the Father both worked on the Sabbath. Equating Himself with God was a step too far as far as the authorities were concerned.

John 5:16-18

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.” For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him.

By chapter 7:1, we are told Jesus was purposely staying away “from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.” That time Jesus went secretly to the Feast and only started to teach in public halfway through it. By that time it was common knowledge about the threat to His life.

John 7:25

At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, “Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill?”

An attempt to arrest Him was made but failed and His further replies to the religious leaders led to an attempt to stone Him, with Jesus later saying to them:

John 8:40

As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.

We don’t know how much time elapsed before Jesus healed a blind man on another Sabbath which brought further condemnation. But it is the reaction of the man’s parents, who were called to testify that he had been born blind, that marks a more sinister tactic of the Jewish authorities.

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John 9:22

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.

This explains the whispering among the crowd in chapter 7:12-13 ending with the telling statement

But no-one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

The failure of the religious authorities to capture and kill Jesus, led to this heinous form of intimidation of the people. Excommunication for a Jew was tantamount to becoming an outcast - a non-person. No graver threat to their acceptance in their communities could have been made. And, if there is still any doubt that this was not a measure of malignant hostility towards Jesus, the section in chapter 10:22-42 dispels that doubt. It describes a body of men whose minds were closed in unbelief holding an implacable determination to be rid of Jesus. They failed in this last attempt to take Him captive, with Jesus leaving Jerusalem and crossing into Jordan at the place where John the Baptist had ministered.

By this time too, we have been told that as a result of some of the teaching that they could not accept, many of His disciples had also turned back. Chapter 6:60-70 is a very emotive moment. Jesus had been referring to Himself as the Bread of Life which He compared to the manna their ancestors had eaten in the wilderness but yet died.

John 6:48-51

I am the bread of life.....But here is the bread that comes down from heaven which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.

Whether through genuine lack of understanding or faced with the understanding that Jesus was referring to His death, many deserted Jesus at this point.

John 6:64

Yet there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.

While the defections may not have come as a surprise, they must have saddened Jesus heart to the extent that He even questioned if the twelve closest to Him would do likewise. Given that John tells us shortly afterwards (7:5) that His own brothers did not believe in Him, a negative response from the disciples could have saddened Jesus even more. That was not the case, for flawed as Peter was, especially in his later denial of Jesus, his reply revealed genuine belief and faith.

John 6:68-69

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Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.

Peter’s questioning of where ‘we’ would go and the assertion that ‘we’ believe and know indicates that he was speaking for the whole group. If this is the case, then Judas’ later betrayal was all the more culpable, because he did it in spite of this knowledge. Apart from Peter, only one other person in the first 11 chapters of John explicitly acknowledges Jesus’ divinity. Nathanael in 1:49 says,

Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.

Excluding the teaching of Jesus, these two expressions of personal faith stand out. Others too believed - that is true. The household of the man whose son was healed just by Jesus’ word all believed. Nicodemus and the woman at the well believed. Yet the overall impression of different peoples’ responses given in John’s account is one of rejection, desertion and violent opposition. Obviously, taken over a three year period, there would have been many times when the pressure would not have been as great or as imminent. At the same time, the Jewish religious calendar which included mandatory visits to Jerusalem for pious Jews, would have, at the very least, increased awareness of the danger that would accompany such visits. But, it is John’s Gospel that brings out the steadily increasing tension engendered by what became open confrontations between Jesus and the religious authorities in Jerusalem.

Thus, the scene John presents to us at the beginning of Passover Week is one in which the fate of Jesus has already been decided by the religious establishment. Because of the way John has presented the intensification of opposition to Jesus; and with the benefit of hindsight, we can see that when Jesus enters the city for the last time as Son of Man, the events of Passover Week will form the climax of His earthly life and ministry. And Jesus knew it for He says,

John 12:27-30

Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? “Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”

Scholars see this as John’s way of presenting Jesus’ inner turmoil, which the other Gospels portray in the Garden of Gethsemane. But regardless of how we view it, it shows a Man who has lived with relentless harassment and opposition for the whole of His public ministry, yet rises above it with an unsullied character and a spirituality that defies description. A Man whose primary concern is the glory of God the Father and the well-being of His followers, which we’ll see in the rest of the talks.

WEEK 2: PUBLIC SIGNIFICANCE

Last week we saw that the harassment, desertion and opposition that Jesus had faced throughout His earthly ministry had not changed His focus or His attitudes to all He came

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in contact with. As we look this week at Jesus' last public appearances, we start to see, that while Jesus is fully aware of what is going to happen to Him, His commitment to His mission never diminishes. If I remember right, Christine pointed out a few weeks ago that our attitudes can be very obvious to people we meet by our body language and the way we appear and behave in public. For us, today, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem which we celebrate on Palm Sunday marks the highlight of Jesus' last public acts. Quite rightly, we remark on the adulation of the crowd and set that alongside the attitude of Jesus, who chose to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey rather than a war horse. This event is the focus of the Matthew, Mark and Luke. But when we come to John, we find a completely different perspective on this event. Instead, the spiritual needs of the crowd come to the forefront of Jesus' final public words. And it is what is happening in the crowd situation that is the focus of John's record.

According to Matthew 21 Jesus' last public appearances start with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple. Preceding this, He healed two blind men and made arrangements for a donkey to be available for that event. Luke follows Matthew in chapter 19 in mentioning the arrangement about the donkey, and gives further detail about the actual entry into the city and the cleansing of the Temple. This is followed by a chapter on the teachings of Jesus after arriving in Jerusalem. Mark does not mention entry into Jerusalem at all. He does mention Jesus' anointing at Bethany prior to this and the arrangements for an upper room to be made available for the Passover supper. Mark also does not mention the cleansing of the Temple. When we turn to John we find that he follows Mark's account regarding the anointing at Bethany but attaches greater significance to this and directly relates events at Bethany to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and His impending death on a cross.

Although the details of Jesus' arrival in the city would have been common knowledge, John still includes the event, but gives it a significance that is missing from the other gospels.

John links the entry into Jerusalem with a before and an after event. Events at Bethany, the home of Martha and Mary and the scene of raising Lazarus from the dead plays a crucial role in John's account of Jesus entry into Jerusalem. Matthew and Mark state Jesus was at the home of Simon the Leper without naming the woman who anoints Jesus' feet. John tells us Lazarus was in the company and Mary is mentioned in this context. A 2000-year distance from life at that time weakens our ability to immediately comprehend the impact of anointing with perfume and wiping Jesus' feet with her hair, for we are largely unaware of the culture that gave rise to anointing with perfume and the reasons for it. The rest of Scripture suggests that perfume was usually reserved for an occasion giving rise to joy and happiness like a coronation, to honour a special guest, bride and groom at a wedding etc. Also, on a sadder occasion, to anoint the dead. Mary's use prior to Jesus' death was an indication of her insight of what was facing Jesus when He entered Jerusalem. If the disciples had finally accepted Jesus' prophecies of His death, then this act would have emphasised that certainty. If not, His words could not have failed to turn their thoughts in that direction. His words also indicate that He was aware that Mary knew exactly what she was doing and the reason for it.

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John 12:7

“Leave her alone,” Jesus replied, “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.”

Clearly Jesus, at this moment in time was acutely aware of His fate in Jerusalem, but was able to look beyond His personal burden to recognise Mary’s intention and give her credit for it. Some scholars suggest this is because Mary’s action showed her empathy with the death of Jesus on a cross, the epitome of public shame and humiliation. Leon Morris, who has written a commentary on John points out that by wiping Jesus’ feet with her hair, Mary had abased herself in abject humility before those present. For a Jewish woman to appear in public, and especially in the presence of so many men, with her hair unbound, was to make her an object of shame and disgrace. The attitudes of the men present would tend in this direction and Judas actually voiced his criticism, albeit on financial rather than cultural grounds. Jesus’ attitude is clear in His statement. There is no judgement on Mary’s lack of propriety. Instead an attitude which accepts that shame and humiliation will be part of the price He will pay to save the world. As already mentioned, His arrival in Jerusalem on a donkey was a more public demonstration of His acceptance of that price.

Jesus could accept this because ultimately He knew how fickle human opinions were. In John 2:23, we are told that at another Passover feast in Jerusalem many people believed because of His miracles. Verses 24-25 continue

But Jesus would not entrust himself to them for he knew all men. He did not need mans testimony about man for he knew what was in man.

That is possibly why John tells us that many in the crowd had ulterior motives for being there. The malign intentions of the religious authorities for one. Sight of a man raised from the dead was another.

John 12:9

Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and come, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

The raising of Lazarus is not mentioned by the other gospel writers, which seems, with the benefit of hindsight, to be a glaring omission in their accounts. According to John, however, the reason for the crowds being there to welcome Jesus was because they had heard about the raising of Lazarus from the mourners who had actually witnessed it.

John 12:17

Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign went out to meet him.

We can accept this as a genuine account because of the detail John gives us about the reaction of the religious authorities. We are told in the other gospels of the objections

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they made to the palm waving and the voices shouting “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Then, in verse 10-11, we are told that the chief priests intended to kill Lazarus as well for it was on account of him that many were believing in Jesus.

John 12:10-11

“So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in Him.

It is legitimate to ask why the murder of Lazarus was also intended. Among the religious rulers were Sadducees, who taught that resurrection from the dead was impossible. Lazarus was living proof that they were wrong and that Jesus was right. Jesus had told Martha:

John 11:25

I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?

And the later resurrection of Jesus would undermine the position and teaching of the Sadducees even further. Additionally it would affirm the deity of Jesus implied in Martha’s reply to Jesus in 11:27.

“Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God who was to come into the world.”

It can be seen that just from giving us a record of what went on publicly at this home in Bethany, and its consequences for what would happen when Jesus entered Jerusalem, John has provided us with the deeper spiritual insights into the Person of Christ and directed our attention to how He is handling His coming death and resurrection.

This is further emphasised in verses 19-36 of chapter 12. And a further glimpse into the attitude of the religious authorities unwittingly signalled it.

John 12:19

So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look at how the whole world has gone after him.”

They had got nowhere in trying to arrest Him and the sight of the crowds seemed to have made them realise that trying to do so publicly would only make the situation worse. For a time it seemed Jesus was left alone to teach those who came to Him. And among those who came to see Him were Greeks. The mention of both Greeks and Jews in this chapter brings together the only two categories of people existing for Jews of that time, and points to the accuracy of Jesus’ words in the following verses that His death was not that of the Jewish Messiah, but that of the Saviour of the world. These people would have been very obviously not Jews and mention of them at this particular point is perplexing because we get no indication that they did get to meet and speak with Jesus which was

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the point of their request. Possibly John was making the point that what the Pharisees didn't realise how true their words were when they said that the 'whole world' going after Him. We are told the Greeks first approached Philip, the most probable reason being that 'Philip' was a Greek name. John doesn't explain any of this, but what he does do is give us Jesus' response to the request. His words after hearing the Greeks wanted to see Him suggest this was the decisive moment in the timing of his death. Leon Morris suggests that the fact that the Greeks had approached Him was the signal that His death would have universal significance. Previously Jesus had stated this in more pictorial language.

John 10:16

I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

We can only speculate about what the Greeks' request signalled to Jesus but the words that He then gave to the crowd, including the Greeks, according to John, was His last public address. Every word that follows is important, but we have only time to mention the main points which show Jesus' attitudes towards His death.

Personally, He declared in verse 23 that "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Jesus, with absolute certainty, knew that He would only be glorified through His own death. But although they may seem triumphant, the words came from a Man who was deeply troubled and by no means oblivious to the suffering that He would undergo.

John 12:27

Now my soul is troubled and what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour?" No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father glorify your name.

I mentioned last week that commentators, see this statement as the equivalent of Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane recorded in the other gospels. But if Jesus expressed these words, publicly, before that time, it shows the genuine feelings of a Man of flesh and blood. It shows Jesus experiencing all the mental and emotional turmoil natural to any person facing crucifixion. Two further statements show Jesus' awareness of both His death and the method by which He would die. In verse 24 the image is of the kernel of wheat falling to the ground and dying. Verse 33 is more explicit for John tells us "**He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.**"

But I, when I am lifted up from the earth will draw ALL men to myself.

So, while fully aware of His fate and the suffering involved, Jesus was able to assert His willingness to go to the Cross in obedience to God's plan. And, He was able to see beyond death to the eternal life that would become available to every man, woman and child on this planet through His atoning sacrifice on the cross. No wonder the writer to the Hebrews would later say in Hebrews 12:2.

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Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

What is also so remarkable is that the voice from heaven in response to Jesus' words, "Father, glorify your name" was not taken as a personal affirmation by Jesus, but Jesus told the crowd it was for their benefit, perhaps to help and encourage them believe in what He was telling them. From these verses we can see that Jesus was still actively involved in His ministry even with His death present in His conscious thoughts and feelings. All that comes through is Jesus' concerns for the salvation of the people He was addressing and all who would follow them.

However, while His death does have universal significance, the salvation it provides is conditional and has consequences depending on the choices made by individuals. Jesus words make a very clear distinction between the choice we all face in the light of the cross.

John 12:25-26

The man who lives his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me....

Jesus is telling us that our choice is between the world's ways and His way. We see this in the challenge from the crowd in verse 34

John 12:34

The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up?' Who is this 'Son of Man?'"

Jesus does not give a direct reply but instead uses the analogy of light and darkness, a frequent theme in this gospel. As the One whom John records as saying came "**into the world as light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.**" (v46), Jesus tells the crowd they need to

John 12:36

Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.

Jesus is telling the crowd that they need to put their trust and faith in Him. Spiritual light is the result of this choice making believers the '**sons of light**'. That these words came from Jesus is reflected in two letters of Paul, before this gospel was written.

1 Thessalonians 5:5

You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

Ephesians 5:8-9

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For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth).

Written, after Paul's death, and in a different context, Luke contrasts believers with non-believers in terms of light.

Luke 16:8

The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.

And the promise to those who choose the path of light is given in verse 26. The assurance that **“where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.” (v26)**

On the other hand, failing to do that and to prefer the world over Christ, and darkness over light, puts people under the jurisdiction of **“the prince of this world”** mentioned in verse 31. For Jesus, Satan was a real and dangerous figure. He will mention him again as “prince of this world” in chapters 14 and 16. Jesus is making us all aware that His death was two dimensional. His life, ministry and atoning sacrifice would have been an empty gesture if He had been unable at the same time to make it the measure of the the defeat of Satan and judgement of the world.

John reminds us of this aspect of judgement in verses 44-50.

Then Jesus cried out, “When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; but every word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.

It is not clear from the arrangement of the chapter whether Jesus said these words to the crowd at this time or on a previous occasion. Verse 36 tells us Jesus had finished speaking after the references to light and darkness. Verses 37-43 are obviously John's summary of the net results of Jesus' public ministry. If Jesus had said what He did in verses 44-50 on a previous occasion, then His words about putting trust in the light while they had the light (36) was a final appeal to all who had heard Him speak of these things in the past. And it is clear from verses 44-50 that His words came directly from God. As the personification of the word of God, acceptance or rejection of all that Jesus had spoken would be the means by which God would determine the eternal fate of each individual.

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As far as the defeat of Satan is concerned, on the cross, Jesus literally battled

Ephesians 6:12

...against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

And He won! The cross may have proclaimed defeat, but it was the moment of victory over the powers of evil.

The crowds listening to Jesus did not foresee this outcome of His death, even though Jesus had performed many miracles, including raising Lazarus from the dead. Yet, as John says and according to what Isaiah predicted, **the majority refused to believe in spite of all the miraculous signs Jesus had done in their presence (v37).**

John's verdict at the end of what he records as Jesus' last public teaching is depressing, especially as the next time Jesus appears in public will be at His trial, when the crowd reappears to demand He be crucified. Reading through chapter 12, however, we can see that Jesus ministered to the crowd's spiritual needs right up to the moment He left them. It is true many could not accept that salvation would come through His death on a cross. But they would certainly had understood the implications of living in darkness or light and the consequences of their choice. Before we censure that crowd, we have to ask has the attitude of today's 'crowd' changed? The majority do not believe in spite of the greater signs of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, evidenced by the public preaching and teaching of Jesus' words through the church which has lasted for 2000 years. But, the good news is that, among countless numbers through the ages and into the future, we are the privileged ones. We have John's record for assurance that all God planned came to pass and the knowledge that Jesus was indeed glorified via the cross, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God the Father. We can thank and praise God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, because once we were all part of that unbelieving crowd, but can now consider ourselves as people of the light, because we believe the words of the Father spoken through the Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. All because -

Up from the grave He arose with a mighty triumph o'er His foes.

He arose a victor from the dark domain and He lives forever with His saints to reign.

He arose, He arose. Hallelujah, Christ arose.

WEEK 3: PRIVATE ENCOUNTERS

We don't know when Jesus' last address to the crowds happened. Very abruptly, from chapter 12, we are taken by John to the upper room in chapter 13. Reading this account from the perspective of Jesus' attitudes and thinking to His impending death the spotlight is usually turned to the washing of the disciples feet. But there is a second and a startling spotlight that is so easily missed. That is, Jesus' attitude towards the two men who are going to let Him down in His hour of need. While other gospels have the account of the inauguration of the Lord's supper, John concentrates on Jesus' action and words relating

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to Peter and Judas. These are all the more significant because Jesus knew what they would both do when the crisis came.

John 13:11, 18 & 38

For he knew who was going to betray him.....

I am not referring to all of you: I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfil the scripture: “He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.” (Psalm 41:9)

Then Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.

I honestly don't know what I would have done with that foreknowledge of that level of hurt that was coming, and that is why I found Jesus' attitudes towards these two men in the upper room so remarkable after reading the chapter again. Because John has made a point of drawing these two disciples to our attention, perhaps we need to take a closer look at them first. With hindsight, we know that Peter was the most prominent among them. We know his role at Pentecost and two letters in the New Testament are attributed to him. In the gospel narratives Peter is the one who speaks the most - sometimes putting his mouth in motion before his brain is in gear! In spite of this, Peter is the one that is blessed with the revelation from heaven that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. John is the one who tells us that when other followers deserted Jesus, Peter spoke for the twelve when he said “To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Yet, even after these revelations, Peter does the work of the devil in having the temerity to tell Jesus that He couldn't go to Jerusalem to die. Not for the first or the last time, Jesus had to put him firmly in his place. Nothing could have been more emphatic or harsh as “Get thee behind me Satan.” When we come to Peter in chapter 13, we again find him at odds with his Master's actions and intentions. Peter, in effect was refusing to let Jesus wash his feet. When Jesus said that their relationship depended on it, Peter then decided he wanted his whole body washed. This encounter showed the extent to which Peter wanted things done his way, without any regard for what Jesus was trying to convey to him. His mind was solely on his own personal feelings and attitudes without stopping to consider, why Jesus should perform this action for the disciples. It would appear from the text that Jesus had already finished washing the feet of other disciples before He came to Peter and Peter's pride couldn't accept this humblest of services from Jesus. Twice more, Peter is mentioned. First in verse 24 when it is Peter who wants to know the identity of the betrayer. Then in verse 37, the boastful declaration that he would lay down his life for Jesus. But in front of the other 10 disciples, Jesus dented his macho pride by declaring that Peter would deny Him three times. That pride was further dented by the fact that it was a humble serving girl who triggered the denials. Before the resurrection, Peter's flaws were so obvious. From the different accounts we can justifiably regard Peter as the mouthpiece of the band of disciples. After Jesus' prediction, Peter remains silent. But while he may have said the wrong thing at the wrong time on various occasions; and the right thing at the right time on a couple of occasions, no one can doubt that, in his own heart and mind, he was well intentioned and deeply

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committed to Jesus.

This is something Jesus had recognised in Peter from the very beginning. John 1:42 tells us that when Andrew told Peter they had found the Messiah and brought him to Jesus

John 1:42

...Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas (which when translated, is Peter.)

Jesus saw Peter, not as he then stood, but what, in time, he would become. From that point on Peter was being moulded into the man he would become when he had to play his part in carrying out the ‘Great commission’ of taking the gospel to the world.

After his denials, we are told Peter wept bitterly. Colloquially we would say He ‘sobbed his heart out.’ Because he truly repented of his words, Jesus was able to reinstate him to close fellowship. Three times, Jesus made him confess his love as John tells us in 21:15-19. Peter was hurt by Jesus insistence but those questions made Peter realise in a way he had not done before, that he truly did love Jesus in the sense that a personal relationship had become a reality to him. Once that was in place, Jesus could give the task of feeding His lambs and His sheep. Jesus also told him he would suffer martyrdom for doing so. But, such was Peter’s love for and commitment to Jesus that rather than deny Him, he became prepared to suffer imprisonment and to die for Him. Tradition has it that Peter was crucified upside down because he regarded himself as unworthy to die in the same position as His Lord. Whether this is true or not does not alter the fact that Jesus’ first prophetic impression of Peter was fulfilled in amazing ways.

We come to a sharp contrast when Judas Iscariot is considered. The evangelists tell us very little about him probably because he proved to be a traitor. We do not know how, when or where he was called to be a disciple and in the lists of the men chosen he is always mentioned last. Unlike Peter, we are not told that anyone brought him to Jesus, so it would seem he was personally selected by Jesus from those who were following Him at the time. We can safely assume that throughout the three years of Jesus’ public ministry that Judas conformed to what constituted discipleship. For example, Luke tells us that Jesus sent out the twelve disciples in mission.

Luke 9:1-2

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick

Judas must have been among them and he must have witnessed many manifestations of divine power on that occasion. More specifically, he would have witnessed the other miracles, for example, the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 which occurred after the Twelve had returned. For three years too, He had the practical example of Jesus’ lifestyle and His preaching and teaching about the kingdom of God. In spite of all this, he became a traitor whose name is a by-word for treacherous dealings to the present day. However, with the benefit of hindsight, we can see that both Old Testament prophecy and

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the passing references in the gospels and Acts give us a picture of what Judas would become.

Psalm 55:12-14 refers to betrayal by a close companion.

If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of the Lord.

Acts 1:16

(Peter) said, “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as a guide for those who arrested Jesus - he was one of our numbers and shared in this ministry.

The evangelists tell us that as one of their number, he acted as treasurer, which was a position of trust and confidence. To all intents and purposes, Judas appeared to be what a disciple of Jesus should be. However, it was this aspect of his service that brought about his downfall. John uses the episode of Mary anointing Jesus with the precious perfume to bring out Judas' mercenary nature. He knew the value of the perfume and what it could contribute to the poor, but John did not see this as an expression of care for the poor, explicitly calling Judas a thief.

John 12:6

...as keeper of the money bag he used to help himself to what was put in it.

But it is especially the price he accepted for the betrayal of Jesus that leaves us with the view that money was the motivating and guiding factor in his action.

Exodus 21:32

If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull must be stoned.

Zechariah 11:12-13

(Zechariah) told them, “If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.” So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter” - the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord to the potter.

It was this preoccupation in his nature that gave the devil the foothold he needed to make Judas his tool. While this was prophesied, Judas was still left with a choice. The evangelists show us betrayal was no 'spur of the moment' decision. Luke 22:1:7 tells us that Judas approached the authorities and discussed it with them and agreed a price. We saw that the authorities could not publicly arrest Jesus because of fear of the crowds and Luke tells us this.

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Luke 22:6

He consented and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

Matthew, in 26:16, and Mark 14:11 also agree that after his discussions with the chief priests, Judas “**watched for an opportunity to hand him over.**” Why Jesus chose the man who would betray Him as a disciple is one of the most perplexing and unanswerable questions in the whole Bible. There are many plausible theories but Scripture does not explicitly confirm or deny any of them. What we do know is that Jesus knew He would be betrayed by one of His own.

John 6:70-71

Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.” (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

Jesus said this in reply to Peter’s words “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Peter included Judas in that ‘we’. An opportunity for Judas to escape his fate, but by 13:2 we find:

John 13:2

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray him.

As far as Judas is concerned, ‘the rest they say, is history.’ Unfortunately, unlike Peter there is no happy ending to Judas’ story. He was sorry for what he had done, but does not appear to have regarded it as a sin, and we have no indication that he repented of the fact he had betrayed an innocent Man; a betrayal that led to both the death of Jesus and his own death by his own hand.

There seems to be no doubt that John deliberately chose to turn the spotlight on these two men. But just like his mention of Lazarus, what concerned them had a much deeper significance for John. It is only as we notice the contrasts between their personalities, actions and fates, that Jesus words and actions take on added meaning for our understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

Jesus told Peter

John 13:7

You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand.

What would Peter, and indeed, all of Jesus’ followers from the time John recorded these words understand about what was done and said. Well first, we find Jesus, despite His coming ordeal being only hours away, and the foreknowledge of how both Judas and Peter would add to His sufferings, in complete control of the situation and intent on using His last moments with them to teach them things that they would recall for the rest of their lives and would pass on to others.

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The very first verse of the chapter sets the tone.

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

This was immediately followed by washing of the disciples' feet. Now, by no stretch of the imagination could this act be seen as demonstrating the 'full extent' of Jesus' love for them. If it was, then there would have been no need for His sacrifice on a cross. While this episode, quite rightly demonstrates that Jesus didn't consider any task to be beneath Him, twice John draws our attention to Jesus own assessment of His status and position.

John 13:3

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.

John 13:13-14

"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and RIGHTLY SO, for that is what I am. Now that I, your lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."

What follows is clear. Jesus tells them He has set them an example. Washing their feet was a practical demonstration - a visual aid - of the extent and level of service each disciple was expected to render to each other. John does not tell us how the disciples reacted to the idea that they should wash one another's feet, but, at the very least, it must have dented their egos - especially as Jesus adds to His instruction by saying:

John 13:16

I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

"I tell you the truth" emphasises that this is no minor matter, but an important commandment. Jesus makes it clear to His disciples that although they have been given a very privileged position as His followers and would become prominent members of the church that would come into being after Pentecost, they had to be willing to carry out even the lowliest tasks within the fellowship. The most menial acts of service had been sanctioned and sanctified by Jesus' practical demonstration of one of them.

What also was understood about this episode later was that water may have cleansed their feet, but it would be the blood of Christ that would cleanse from all sin. He was referring to this future understanding of His action. Many of our older hymns bring out this meaning in words like "washed in the blood of the Lamb", "wash me cleanse me in the blood that flowed from Calvary." etc. Jesus had washed the feet of both men, a symbol of the cleansing that was available should even the "vilest offender" repent of his actions. The fact that Jesus knew Judas would not is given in verse 10 where He refers to not all of them being clean. No name mentioned, but we know it was Judas being referred to.

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We have no knowledge of Judas' reaction and the chapter continues with the men eating the meal that was being served while Jesus washed their feet. John returns to this assessment of Judas, Jesus once again in verse 18 and 21 prophesying the betrayal and being deeply troubled when He mentioned it the second time. Again no name uttered. Only said so that the other disciples would realise He spoke the truth.

John 18-19 & 21

I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfil the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me. I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He....I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.

This again, is an important point. We have hints throughout this chapter of Jesus' gift of prophecy and one of the most significant hallmarks of a true prophet was the fulfilment of what had been prophesied. John does not tell us why Jesus was deeply troubled. Was it on account of the betrayal by someone who had been close to Him for 3 years? Did He say it to give Judas the chance to change his mind, knowing Jesus knew what He did? Did Jesus say it because He knew that if Judas rejected Him, that he was also rejecting the God who had sent Jesus into the world? That last scenario Jesus knew would lead to eternal damnation, in accordance with what had been said in John 3:18

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Jesus elaborated on this statement when He told the all the disciples, emphasising His words with "I tell you the truth."

John 13:20

I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.

Judas could have had no clearer warning of the danger of his intention to betray Jesus. By not revealing his identity until He was asked to do so gave Judas every chance to remain one of the Twelve without a stain on his character. John tells us that apart from the person who asked Jesus who would betray Him, the others thought "Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the feast or to give something to the poor" - something that was customary at this time. And Jesus also offered him the invitation to remain by passing him the piece of bread, for this act was one that was usually extended to an honoured guest. As a final verdict on Judas, John tells us it was night when Judas left. Light and darkness are themes in this gospel and what Judas was about to do John places firmly in the realm of the darkness associated with all that was evil and anti-God.

Yet from all the troubled emotions of being betrayed, Jesus amazingly was able to put them to one side once He knew He could do no more for Judas. Jesus knew that departure was the beginning of the end for Judas, but also the beginning of the end of

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His earthly ministry. His words, which according to John were said as soon as Judas left were:

John 13:31

When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him.

Jesus’ thoughts returned to God and the glory that would belong to God through Him. He also knew that glory would come via a cross. Although prophesied, all the events that would occur between that Thursday night and Sunday morning, began when Judas left that upper room. We are told that Satan had entered into him and the outcome of the greatest spiritual battle for the souls of humanity was moving towards its climax. A climax that would achieve a great victory over the powers of Satan, evil, sin and death.

Jesus’ mind however, was not on His ordeal. Again, we see that without any trace of thought for Himself, He carried on with the task God had sent Him to do. The rest of chapter 13 starts some of the most profound teaching and prayer not found anywhere else in Scripture. Coming when they did and, spoken in the most intimate setting, that of a shared meal, with His most intimate followers, gives them a very special place in anything we may say about the week leading to the crucifixion. And they are special because He is saying the same things to us today.

WEEK 4: PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

From chapter 13:31 to the end of chapter 17, John has recorded for us Jesus’ last teaching, which is of such spiritual depth that the words and concepts have given rise to countless books and sermons. What Jesus said to His most committed disciples - for He only started after Judas had left - amounts to a spiritual legacy that will never fade. Time only allows an overview of these chapters. Two overarching themes come to the fore in chapters 13:31 to chapter 16 and I think you would probably all agree that from Jesus’ whole ministry the most important was His relationship with God the Father. And, John’s account forces us to confront this issue because an overall pattern in Jesus’ words

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is that of an essential unity which does and will exist into eternity not just between the three Persons of the Godhead but will all who are 'in Christ' as well. Whether we like it or not, we come face to face with the relationship within the Godhead - which theologians call the Trinity. In that entity, the relationship between God the Father and God the Son takes precedence.

When we looked at the Lord's Prayer, I mentioned that the term 'Father' was used over 100 times in John's Gospel. In the three chapters 14, 15 and 16 it is used by Jesus 50 times, 22 of those in chapter 14 alone. No debate or discussion could fail to conclude from this fact that there is an inextricable link between God as Father and Jesus as Son. Nor could any open minded person deny that it was a personal one. And when the Holy Spirit is mentioned later, that relationship becomes even more intricate. That means that starting with the personal relationship that exists between God and Jesus, which is extended by the Holy Spirit and later by the inclusion of the disciples, takes us into matters we can't fully explain. Yet

everything that Jesus says points to this unity as a reality which can be known and understood. Why else would Jesus have put such emphasis on this divine connection?

14:10-11

I am in the Father.....Father in me

14:20

I am in my Father

16:32

My Father is with me

Jesus, for example, does not speak of His coming death, but of "going away." And, He makes it clear that He is going to the Father.

14:12

I am going to the Father

16:10

I am going to the Father

16:28

I came from the Father.....am going back to the Father

Furthermore, Jesus is quite explicit in saying that if the disciples knew Him they would know the Father and His answer to Philip when he asked to be shown the Father is even more plain.

14:9

Jesus answered, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

On the basis of these statements we have to admit that these claims could not be made by a mere human being. Only One who was indistinguishable from God could have asserted these things. While we can accept all these statements as true on the basis of faith, they still do not clarify how we are to understand the divine unity of Father and Son in

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practical terms.

Leon Morris' words which came at the end of a section on the miracles in John's gospel, opened up a way to do this. The saying about thoughts eventually leading to a destiny is not a perfect illustration but it conveys ways in which "Unity of being means unity of action and unity of action points to unity of being" can be more clearly explained. These chapters in John give us the Scriptural basis for seeing the unity which Jesus emphasises initiated by God the Father, worked out by God the Son and perpetuated through the Holy Spirit.

To start with, we can refer this back to the Greeks' request to 'see' Jesus. This did not simply mean a visual glimpse of Him, which possibly they had already if they were among the crowds Jesus was teaching. What John means us to understand is that they wanted to get to know what kind of a Person Jesus was, what He was like in character. And if we first go back to 13:31-32, and then to some other verses, we see how Jesus has given His disciples and us, the way to see God, through all that He said and did while He was on earth.

When it comes to unity in action, we need a closer look at the words 'glorified' and 'glorify' which Jesus emphasised in 13:31.

John 13:31-32

When he (Judas) was gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified IN him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

The plain meaning of the words is that God is glorified in Jesus and the Son is glorified in God. The use of the word 'in' in relation to God and Jesus speaks of the essential unity between the two. Jesus also repeats the words that the Father will be glorified in the Son in 14:13. Children are taught (at least I think they still are) that verbs are 'doing' words - and these verbs indicate a particular form of action that, in the Hebrew mind, could be applied only to God. To be glorified in each other means that there is a mutual recognition of the honour and dignity of the other. There is a recognition of the esteemed position of each other. There is a mutual knowledge of Who and What the two Persons are and that, as a consequence both are to be celebrated in praise, worship and adoration. In other words, such was their personal relationship that their characters, with all that that means in terms of purpose, aims and methods of achieving those aims, were in a perfect unity that would manifest itself in what was about to happen to Jesus. And the rest of Scripture agrees with John that God was glorified in Jesus at that particular moment through His willing obedience to undergo death on a cross. That will be followed by glorification through the resurrection of Jesus which, at one and the same time is a demonstration of God's power over death and His seal of approval on the work of His Son.

We can understand this with the benefit of hindsight, but the disciples were hearing these words before that happened and in their situation verses 10 and 24 in chapter 14 would

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have been especially relevant. Both words and actions which they have been witness to for 3 years are attributed to God being in Jesus and vice versa.

14:10

.....The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather it is the Father living in me who is doing his WORK.

14:24

.....These WORDS you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

Jesus by sight of His works, and by the sound of His words had made God very real to the disciples. And Jesus had held nothing back.

John 15:15

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

At the end of the day, we do need faith to believe in the divine aspect of the mutual indwelling of Father and Son because it is outside of our human experience and knowledge. But what Jesus told His disciples gives us information that helps us to understand that our faith is not blind. It gives us the basis of being able to give a Scriptural reason for the hope that is in us as Peter urges us to do. Just by paying attention to the character of Jesus; by seeing how perfectly Jesus' earthly ministry dovetailed exactly with God's purpose of salvation; and by believing in the miracles and, very importantly, by listening to and obeying His words, gives us examples of the personal relationship that existed between God and Jesus, Because of that we can relate to and understand that "unity of action points to unity of being."

However, Jesus did not speak of this unity to give the disciples a theological understanding of who or what God was. There was also a very practical reason of emphasising the oneness of Father and Son. Both would be involved in providing the means by which the disciples themselves would become an integral part of that relationship.

John 14:20

On that day you will realise that I am in my Father and you are in me, and I am in you.

When you think of it, that is a mind-blowing assertion. That does not mean that we will have the divine essence that unites Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but that as a result of the coming of the Holy Spirit we are drawn into a spiritually designed relationship in which we play a part in the divine plans for this world and for eternity. This really is a staggering proposition. This was something for the future understanding of the disciples. But it is Paul's great theme of everything being "in Christ" and "through Christ" and part

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of 'the body of Christ' which explains the outworking of what this was to mean for the disciples after the resurrection and Pentecost and all believers since then.

In the immediate situation of the disciples, however, all they were aware of was that Jesus words to them were indicating circumstances were moving towards a momentous change. Jesus did not speak of dying but of 'going away'. All of us know that all parting from those we are close to is never a pleasant occasion. Hence the reason why Jesus recognised that they were filled with grief at the idea of losing His physical presence with them. We have indications of how close the relationship between Jesus and the disciples was by the terms He used of them. He calls them '**my children.**' The term used means 'little children' which was a term of affection from a teacher towards His students. This caring concern is further indicated by 14:18 when Jesus tells them He will not leave them **orphans**. In other words, He would not leave them neglected and would be there to support them through whatever they faced. Chapter 15:13-14 could not be more clear as to what Jesus was prepared to do for them and to prepare them for what would come in their not-to-distant future.

15:13 - 14

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father, I have made known to you.

Friends in this context is used of close, lasting friendship characterised by mutual love, respect and trust and identifying with each other in thought, heart and spirit. Jesus goes on to say that He has chosen them and appointed them to bear fruit in the future. For that to happen, a way had to be found to make sure that friendship and the practical outcomes resulting from it endured beyond Jesus' departure from the world.

Given that Jesus only spoke the words which had originated with God, what He then told the disciples took them into confidence of the Godhead as to how the earthly relationship that had existed between Jesus and the disciples would be transformed into a supernatural one. A spiritual relationship that would embrace Father, Son, Holy Spirit, disciples and by extension, all true believers in Christ would become as real as the physical relationship the disciples had enjoyed with Jesus for the three years of His earthly ministry. We are able to assert this because of Jesus' words in 16:25:30. In the context of prayer Jesus tells the disciples that He does not have to pray for them because God already loves them because they loved Jesus and believed that He had come from God.

16:27

...the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

This established the connection between God, Jesus and the disciples. If the words had simply been left there, this relationship would have been one of personal belief only. It could never have replaced the sense of the personal relationship involved in Jesus'

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physical presence. It's no wonder the disciples were distressed by Jesus' assertions that He was going away. In their situation we would probably have felt Jesus death was the end of any kind of personal relationship with Him. Again, the disciples, at this point in time, would have had no concept of Jesus being with them in another form. But Jesus gave them reason to believe that an even closer relationship was going to be possible through the coming of the Counsellor. Jesus emphasised this by stating He was telling them the truth.

16:7

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

This was the fourth mention of this event. Jesus would no longer be restricted by physical or geographical considerations, but through the Holy Spirit coming would still be active in and through them.

14:16

And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth.

14:26

But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

15:26

When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify for you have been with me from the beginning.

This was Jesus' clear and explicit way of telling them that the removal of His physical presence would give way to the establishment of a relationship that would bind them even closer to Him in a very personal way, which would be evidenced by their future action in testifying to all that He had revealed to them while He was with them.

Scholars have pointed out a contradiction between chapter 14 which indicates the Spirit will come from the Father and the reference in 15:26 where Jesus says He will send the Spirit. But given the essential unity of Father and Son, there is no contradiction, for this is a plain example of unity in action. The Spirit proceeds from both Father and Son as His very description shows. The Spirit is 'Holy'. This immediately identifies Him with God the Father whose essence is holiness. That He is the 'Spirit of truth' identifies Him with Jesus, who had just told the disciples that He was Truth (14:6). The disciples are told explicitly in 14:23 that both Jesus and the Father will come and will make their home with the people who love Jesus and obey His teaching. And only One who shared the characteristics of Father and Son would have been capable of forming the kind of relationship with the disciples that would lead to striving to attain the character of Christ and a true meeting of minds as to the purpose of the union of the Godhead and believers.

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Again, like the disciples at this point in time, we have no understanding of how that could be. But also, like the disciples with the benefit of hindsight, we can identify the presence of the Holy Spirit by His work in us personally, in the growth and expansion of the Church and His continuing work in the world at large. When the disciples did start to testify, as Jesus said they must do, it was a direct result of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The book of Acts shows the disciples, inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit fulfilling all that Jesus said would happen when the Spirit came. Father Son and Holy Spirit were at one with the disciples in revealing the whole process of the divine purpose of salvation. Personally, the disciples would testify through dissemination of all that Jesus had taught them. Their union with the Holy Spirit would bring back not just the words, but the understanding of everything Jesus had said.

John 14:26

But when the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said.

John 16:13

But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears.....

In other words, what the disciples will remember and learn through the work of the Holy Spirit, will be exactly what has already been given to them from the Father and from the Son. This unity is further emphasised in verses 14 and 15

He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

John could not have made the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in terms of character, purpose and action more explicit. The fact that the Holy Spirit would indwell the disciples and enable them to carry on Jesus' mission to save the world included them in this union as they strived to become more Christlike and as they proceeded to testify to all that Jesus had said and done during His earthly ministry.

That legacy is still with us to the present day. What the disciples preached and taught would be the same message Jesus had given. People would be confronted with the issues of sin, righteousness and judgement. Firstly, people were faced with the fact of their guilt before God and individual consciences were faced with a choice or believe or reject Christ. Jesus prediction in John 16 was first fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

John 16:8-9

When he comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement; in regard to sin because men do not believe in me.....

Acts 2:37

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When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins would be followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit, making the relationship with Jesus, in whose name they were baptised, a personal one. At the same time they entered into a personal, but communal relationship, with all believers. Unity came through being brought into a living fellowship spiritually with Christ which manifested itself in the birth of the Christian community, which we now call the church, whose existence today, is proof positive of the legacy of the relationships Jesus highlighted in His last hours with His disciples. That unity was to be further evidenced by the righteousness of Christ which every believer was to strive towards. It was also to be evidenced by the belief that the cross passed judgement on evil because a just God condemned and overthrew Satan, the source of all evil.

Together with what has been said about the intrinsic unity of the Godhead, these principles are parts of the legacy brought Christianity into being and demonstrate the truth that: “Unity of being means unity of action and unity of action points to unity of being.”

Paul summed this up for us in Ephesians 2:20-22

[you are]....built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

And in just a few moments we will personally affirm this when we sing.

As we are gathered Jesus is here.

One with each other, Jesus is here.

Joined by the Spirit, washed in His blood

Part of the body, the Church of God

As we are gathered Jesus is here, one with each other, Jesus is here.

WEEK 5: PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

Last week we saw that part of the legacy of Jesus’ death would be a very special kind of personal relationship for when Jesus asserted, in John 14:20

I am in my Father and you are in me and I am in you. He knew it would become a reality when the Holy Spirit came. Yet while we can accept this as a fact, we cannot deny that it involves a mysterious connection which our finite minds cannot fully understand or explain. This is where walking by faith and not sight is of paramount importance. As David often quotes - now we see through a glass darkly -but in God’s time, all will become clear to us one day. In the meantime however, we have to live in

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the light of what we know of this relationship, for it is the bedrock of the Christian faith and practice. It is not just an intellectual belief. It is a relationship that Jesus intended to be manifested in the daily lives of His followers. The whole of the Christian life is based upon a vital connection with a living Lord and, from John's record, what the disciples will become and what they will do in the future is completely dependent upon this one principle.

So, because of this we can ask the questions: What should a Christian be and what should be the governing principles in their practical lives? Reading through chapters 13:31 to the end of chapter 16, we find that the disciples were perplexed by what Jesus was saying and Philip, Thomas and Judas all asked Him questions. Jesus told them there was much more He could say but they could not bear it, but the Holy Spirit would tell them what is to come.

16:12-13

I have much more to say to you more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.

Jesus also gave the reasons why giving them this teaching.

14:20

I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

15:11

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

15:27

And you also must testify for you have been with me from the beginning.

16:1

All this I have told you so that you will not go astray.

16:4

I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.

Also, Jesus emphasises what He is telling them by repeating "I tell you the truth". In other words, all that Jesus was teaching them and revealing to them would have a direct bearing on how their lives would be affected in the future. What comes through very clearly is that their way of life would be obviously different and at odds with the prevailing society. I hope no one will feel insulted by being compared to a 1960s hippy. But if we are looking for an illustration of how a group of people become so glaringly different to the rest of society, then the hippy movement is a good example. The movement claimed to free its followers from the morally restrictive, militaristic and materialistic norms of society and enable them to choose a way of life which they

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claimed would promote love, peace and joyful kind of happiness. The hippies formed a sub-culture that spread throughout the western world and beyond. That is what happened in the first century with the emergence of Christianity. It too turned the world 'upside down', spread far beyond its point of origin and also promoted the values of love, joy and peace among its followers and to the world at large. Now, 2000 years later, in our secular society, Christianity is the sub-culture - going against the atheism, liberalism and materialism of the modern world. And Jesus teaches His disciples that that is the reason they will be seen to be different and will suffer because of it in ways that the hippies never did.

Judas asks the question that leads to Jesus distinguishing His disciples from the world, by which John means, the society we live in.

14:19 & 22

Before long the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you will also live.

Then Judas(not Judas Iscariot) said, "But Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

Judas' question bypassed what Jesus had said in the intervening verses possibly because at this stage the disciples knew Jesus was about to be killed, yet He is saying that because He lives they will live. Jesus doesn't directly answer Judas' question, but makes it clear that they will see Him through belief in who He is and obedience to His teaching - teaching that the world at large will not accept and, furthermore, will persecute the disciples because of it.

15:18-19

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

In effect, what Jesus is saying is that His disciples are in the world but not of it because He has chosen them to belong to Him. They are following a different Leader, they belong to a different jurisdiction; they are following different laws to the rest of the society. This is made clear by Jesus twice mentioning the "prince of this world." This clearly indicates that there are only two kinds of allegiance. People are either following Jesus or following Satan who holds sway over all unredeemed humanity. And within a few hours the disciples would be grief stricken because the crucifixion of Jesus would make it appear that the world under the bondage of Satan had won the day.

14:30

I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me.

16:20

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I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.

Today, we grieve over the dishonour and rejection of all that God and His Christ stands for. We see the persecution of Christians all over the world now. Some suffer horrific torture and even death. Other in the western world are persecuted more subtly through a denial of the freedoms which are enshrined in law, but abused by those who wish to discredit and deny Christians an equal place in society. Satan is truly at work. But Jesus left His disciples a verbal legacy that, if believed and acted upon meant Christians could live with hope, regardless of how dire circumstances became. Jesus was honest enough to tell the disciples that, apart from the world's hatred of them, they would have trouble and even mentioned what form it would take.

16:33

.....In the world you will have trouble.....

16:1-2

All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.

I mentioned that excommunication for Jew made them an outcast. I couldn't help but think that the second thing is exactly what jihadists believe they are doing today. But Jesus also tells the disciples to **"take heart"** (16:33) for He has overcome the world. The disciples are in a safe pair of hands. In the first place, as mentioned, His resurrection would turn their grief to joy (16:20). Jesus makes no secret of the fact that His followers have a choice. To follow the ways of the world and conform to its practices and values; or follow the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. (14:6).

And, it is when we come to the way in which the disciples and all believers are to manifest the fundamental principles of the Christian life Jesus teaches, that the comparison between the hippy movement and Christianity comes to an abrupt end. The hippies had the right ideals - love, peace and happiness - but interpreted them in a human way which ultimately depended on their feelings about external circumstances. For the hippies, peace meant the absence of war and nuclear disarmament. CND signs were everywhere. Happiness which resulted in joy would be achieved through transcendental meditation, music, hallucinogenic drugs and the freedom to go where they liked and do what they liked. Love simply came to mean sexual license. They had the right lifestyle goals, but went the wrong way about achieving them. Theirs is a prime example of the way the world can take what is good and right and turn it into something which is against all that God intended it to be.

According to the apostle Paul, love, joy and peace are the right aspirations for Christians for they are the first three manifestations of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. But it was Jesus who first defined what they were and the way to achieve them. A personal relationship with Christ must come first. Jesus told the truth when He said that He was the Way for as

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we saw last week, Jesus' way is God's way and is the way that leads to life in eternity. That is brought home to us by the Holy Spirit.

14:26

But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

That is why Jesus taught in chapter 15 about the Vine and the branches. It is absolutely essential to stay in touch or as the text says to remain in Jesus' way if we are to live our lives in accordance with the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

15:4-5

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

That means that the fruit of real love, joy and peace are impossible to achieve in life unless we have that oneness, that unity with Father, Son and Holy Spirit that we talked of last week for that oneness is maintained by the production of this kind of fruit in our lives. At the same time we have to realise that what Jesus meant by these three practical consequences of remaining in Him, do not correspond with the world's definition or description of them.

I'm grateful to David for picking Philippians, describing it as the letter of joy, for he has shown, through Paul's imprisonment, that joy is independent of external circumstances. It's something that can only come from a divine source as Jesus states in 15:11. And that is why we can talk about Jesus leaving a legacy of love, joy and peace.

15:11

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

His joy bears no resemblance to the happy or unhappy feelings we experience in our everyday lives. Paul's constant repetition of the word 'rejoice' in spite of circumstances, is the outward manifestation of this inner spiritual possession.

I've taken 'joy' first for three reasons. Firstly, because it is the complete opposite to how the disciples were feeling as Jesus spoke. Secondly, because of something I knew but had never really registered is that joy comes before peace in Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Thirdly, because joy is mentioned in the prayer in chapter 17 but peace isn't. So, what can be said about joy is that, although in terms of feelings, it seems insensitive to speak of joy to the disciples given their grief, Jesus words in 16:22 would come true sooner than they thought, for three days later the resurrection would be a reality. "I know that my Redeemer liveth" was the foundation of grief turning to joy for the disciples. That same truth is the foundation stone of Christian joy for as long as this world lasts.

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Not only joy but also peace is His legacy.

14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

16:33

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

Jesus' words imply that both joy and peace are supernatural because God alone is the source of peace. We saw at Christmas that 'peace on earth' was the message in the angels' song. When Jesus speaks of 'my peace' this is the sense of well-being that comes from that heavenly source. And in just a few hours Jesus would establish the covenant of peace with God by the shedding of His blood on the cross. It was a covenant that would remain in force as long as the right relationship with the Lord was maintained. Remaining in Christ as the branch in the vine means that true peace is closely connected to the righteousness that comes through faith in the atoning work of Christ. And that righteousness must be manifested in life in a very specific way for the love of God, manifested in Christ, is the crowning legacy of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Love underpins everything involved in Christianity. It cannot be repeated often enough that

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Love is the immovable, unchangeable and indestructible foundation upon which our faith is based. It is love that cements and strengthens the personal relationships involved in the Christian life and keeps on taking us towards the ultimate goal of complete and eternal unity with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Just as love motivated God's action into sending Jesus into the world to die for our sins, so love must motivate all that we do as Christians.

And, like the concepts of joy and peace, a very clear distinction has to be made between what the Bible means by love and what the world means by love. We've mentioned before that we use just one word to encompass what was meant by 4 Greek words for the concept of love. When the love of God or of Christ is mentioned, the Greek word is always 'agape'. No human being is capable of this pure form of love because it is the kind of love that the world cannot know or understand apart from Christ.

Think of what the word 'love' can mean, excuse and justify in the world today. In the world at large, like the hippies of the 60s, love can come to mean whatever a person wants it to mean or how it should be expressed. Love is used today as justification for many things prohibited by God's laws. "If it feels right, do it" was a popular slogan and

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song, which put forward the view that a person's feelings or motivation of love could dictate their actions and attitudes. But we all know how quickly feelings can change and motivation is more often than not, selfish and self-promoting. The person who first said 'love is blind' in relation to the world's version of it was nearer the truth than they perhaps realised.

In contrast, there is a Don Francisco song with the line "Love is not a feeling, it's an act of your will." That is another way of putting the first command Jesus gave His disciples just after Judas left.

13:34-35

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Jesus comes back to it in 14:15, 21 and 23. Love and obedience are the two sides of the one coin.

14:15

If you love me, you will obey what I command.

14:21

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

14:23

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.

These verses are very explicit. Love is not a feeling, but an ethic and a moral imperative. To be commanded to love someone, regardless of how you feel about them, seems an impossible imposition. Yet Jesus Himself explains why this is demanded of His followers.

14:31

But the world must learn that I love the Father and I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

15:9-10, 12

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.....My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Jesus has set the example of obedience to the Father's will even when it is taking Him to

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a cross of shame and agony. Jesus goes on to say that there is no greater love than die for friends and some have taken these commands to mean that this love should only be extended to those within the fellowship of believers. This is partly true. Love must begin in such a fellowship as a witness to the world that we are different. It was this mutual concern that first attracted people to the Christian faith and I don't think any of us would deny that differences and divisions among the Christian communities today put many people off coming to Church. Paul gives us an excellent summary of what it means to witness to this kind of love in practical terms. in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, which the Message puts in plain language.

Love never gives up.
Love cares more for others than for self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first,"
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
Doesn't revel when others grovel,
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts God always,
Always looks for the best,
Never looks back,
But keeps going to the end
(1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Message)

Jesus fulfilled all of these criteria even while He hung on the cross. Going to the cross itself revealed how He went beyond them.

Paul sums it up for us.

Romans 5:7

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Agape love is self-sacrificing love extended even to enemies and those who will revile, ridicule and reject it. Billy Graham said that

“God proved His love on the Cross. When Christ hung, and bled, and died, it was God saying to the world, ‘I love you’.”

Another way of putting this truth is

“The greatest symbol of love is not the heart but the cross. Why? The heart stops beating but the Man on the cross never stops loving.”

This is what we have been seeing in these chapters in John's gospel. A Man facing a horrific death, even by the standards of a barbaric age, yet able and willing to give His

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disciples all the information He could to encourage them not to give up in the face of His death, and a legacy of love, joy and peace to go with it. Next week we come to the prayer He prayed, probably in Gethsemane. As we will see, right to the end, Jesus' concerns were for the glory of God and the future well-being of His followers.

WEEK 6: PRIESTLY PRAYER

What we have seen over these past 5 weeks is the Man, Jesus, under enormous pressure as He faces death. What we have also seen so far is that, although aware of what was ahead of Him and experiencing inner turmoil because of it, His primary focus was His Father and His disciples. When we come to chapter 17, we find that this concern is extended to all future believers. The NIV divides the chapter into the first 5 verses where Jesus prays for Himself; then verses 6-19 for His disciples; and from 20 to 26 for those who will believe their message. Our time would not allow us to do justice to even these three sections, bearing in mind that Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones took a year to preach 46 sermons on them. What did come through, however, was the fact that this prayer of Jesus could also be seen as a summary of what He had taught the disciples in the previous three and a bit chapters. So, since I summarised those chapters, what you are getting now is a summary of the summary. That's the only way I can convey the wealth of spiritual teaching in what John has recorded for us. We don't know exactly when or where Jesus prayed this prayer. All we can be certain of is that it was made in the presence of the disciples and was spoken aloud. John would not have been able to make a record of it otherwise.

To start with, what the disciples heard was a preview of the ministry of intercessory prayer that Jesus would continue for His followers when He was exalted to the right hand of the Father. Secondly, everything that Jesus prays about is still as relevant today as it was then and perhaps even more so given the secular rejection of all that the Word of God stands for. Thirdly, the fact that Jesus makes these things the basis of prayer brings home to us, not just their importance, but the certain knowledge that God will say 'Yes' to everything, because the prayer comes from the lips of His Son, who can confidently and truthfully state that "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And He would finish that work by death on a cross.

The main points that relate to what has already been talked about begins with Jesus re-emphasising the basis upon which everything else rests, that is, the glory and unity of the Godhead with believers. That in turn, brings back into focus the divinely given gifts of love and joy that are an integral part of that unity. Jesus concern for His followers comes again in the warning about the opposition from the world, which can only be overcome by the absolute necessity of heeding and obeying the words that have been given. Only by the Word, which He personified, can His followers be kept from succumbing to worldly pressures and for the help needed to progress in their faith and practice of the Christian life.

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Going to the very first verse of the chapter we can see that it echoes the very first concern of Jesus when He started teaching after Judas had left. Glory is a recurring theme throughout the chapter and from these verses it can be seen that it encompasses Father, Son and all believers. So it is no exaggeration to call the personal relationship upon which Christianity is founded as a glorious one.

13:31-32

....Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once.

17:1

Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you.

17:4-5

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Of the disciples

17:10

All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

Of all believers

17:22

I have given them the glory that you gave me that they may be one as we are one.

17:24

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

I've put all these verses together because they once again focus our attention on the inextricable link between Father and Son. Glory is directly related to the character and the attributes of God which encompasses all that God is and does. Jesus describes two of those things when He addresses God as Holy Father in verse 11 and Righteous Father in verse 25. Pausing just for a moment for thought. Given that Jews never addressed God as 'Father' in relationship terms, could any Jew, in their right mind, have ever mentioned their own glory in relation to a Holy and Righteous God? Would any Jew have dared to equate his name with the name of God the way Jesus does in verse 11? Only One who had already possessed all that these terms involved would have dared to put these words in the form of a prayer to God. This, too, comes out clearly in verses 5 as Jesus refers to the glory He had with the Father "before the world began" and the love they shared "before the creation of the world" in verse 24

There are many more examples throughout the chapter of the relationship between Father

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and Son. Just as Jesus permitted His disciples to ask Him questions, He permits us to ask them too. We can ask in the context of this talk, why did Jesus emphasise His personal relationship with God? He answers that question in verses 25:26, which echoes 14:9

17:25-26

Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

14:9

.....Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.....I am in the Father and the Father is in me.....

In other words, unless the disciples believed that Jesus and God were one and the same divine entity, there was no way that the personal relationship they shared could be extended to the disciples and then to all believers in the future. If Jesus' relationship with God was not what He claimed it to be, then everything else in this prayer for the disciples and for all believers was just empty words with no basis in reality.

But the great thing is - Jesus' claims were true. Because of this belief in Jesus, then we can all be assured that what is prayed in the rest of the prayer will not only become real in the lives of believers but will have eternal significance.

17:2

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

17:23

I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Just as Jesus brought glory to God first by His own unfailing trust in God's plan of salvation and being prepared to obey God's way of working it out, even when it took Him to a cross, so we bring glory to Christ by believing He is who He claims to be and trusting in and obeying everything that He has commanded. And by bringing glory to Christ in this way, that glory also becomes glory to God. That is what the catechism means when it states - "Man's chief end is to glorify God." We can only do this through Christ for as Jesus told His disciples in 14:6

John 14:6

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

Nothing could have been more explicit than this and after further plain speaking about

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coming from the Father and leaving the world to go back to the Father in 16:28, it finally sinks in with the disciples. And Jesus is satisfied that it has because He says in verse 16:31, **“You believe at last!”**

And we know now, but the disciples didn't know at the time, was that they would actually see Him with their own eyes, going back to the Father. After telling them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit we are told in Acts 1:9-11

Acts 1:9-11

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid them from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood before them. “Men of Galilee....why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

If the resurrection brought joy to the disciples, this assurance that Jesus would fulfil the promise He made to them in 14:3

John 14:3

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

He re-emphasises this when He says in 17:13

John 17:13

I am coming to you (God the Father) now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

How can we not be in awe of Jesus speaking of His joy when within 12 hours He will be being put to death on a cross and within 24 hours He will be lying in a grave? The writer to the Hebrews picked up on this when he wrote.

Hebrews 12:2

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

It is this text that helps to explain Jesus' joy. It was the joy of 'mission accomplished' for He had completed the work God had given Him to do. He had been the person God wanted Him to be. He had done what God had requested Him to do in the way that God wanted it done. Plus, He had spoken and taught only the words that had been given to Him by God. But even more than that. Jesus also knew that His coming death and resurrection would bring even greater glory to God for it meant the defeat of Satan and the saving of a multitude of souls from the sin and death that came through Satan. This would become a reality because of the continuation of His ministry through the agency of the disciples working under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, and on into eternity by those who believed because of the gospel witness they would give to the

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world. That is why He told them in 14:12

John 14:12

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father.

Jesus' earthly ministry was limited by time and geography. In contrast His followers would take all that He had given them to the four corners of the world until He returned to take believers to be with Him for eternity. That is why we can understand Paul's joy in Philippians because he realised even his imprisonment was advancing the gospel. The word he uses of the progress of the gospel is actually a military word used to describe the advance of a victorious army. That 'army of ordinary people' is still advancing the gospel of Christ today in spite of the fact that down through the ages Christians have found that the world, the flesh and the devil will all conspire to rob them of their joy in the Lord. But when Christian joy is the assurance of being loved and redeemed by Christ, of being adopted by God the Father and of being a joint heir with Christ of all His riches, then it remains grounded in the truth of the certainty of God's promises which can never fail. It is only a persevering faith and belief in these things enables us to rejoice regardless of feelings or circumstances.

Paul was able to express his joy when he wrote to the Philippians because he had faith in and believed

2 Corinthians 1:20

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

And we need to read the other chapters in association with this prayer because Jesus talks of 'these things' when His prayer relates to His coming to the Father. They are also related to the full measure of joy which Paul was expressing.

John 17:13

I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

All that Jesus said to the disciples in that upper room after Judas left is what is meant by "these things." And it is by faith and belief in "these things" that will give the joy He speaks of. Again there seems to be a contradiction, for joy within them will come in the context of the world's hatred of them, and the danger from the evil one which are mentioned in verses 14 and 15. We saw last week how Jesus had already warned them of the world's opposition to them and their message. He warned of persecution and it is traditionally believed that all the disciples were martyred. The Book of Acts shows how this prophecy was being fulfilled from the very emergence of the Church. From Jesus' perspective this would be an inevitable reaction to the spread of the gospel. But Jesus had also given the disciples an alternative perspective.

16:33

HOLY WEEK

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

These words find an echo in John 17:14:18

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself that they too may be truly sanctified.

Sanctify simply means to set aside for a holy purpose. Just as Jesus was ‘set aside’ for God to bring about the salvation of the world, so Jesus ‘sets aside’ His disciples to be His messengers bringing news of that salvation to the world. Sometimes we see sanctification as reaching a standard of holiness or striving towards a standard of piety, greater faith or love for God. Jesus mentions none of these things. For Him, all of what we think of as signs of sanctification are all the natural consequence of making the Word of God a priority in the way we speak, think, act and feel. Jesus, Himself said that “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” Jesus was the living Word and the world was overcome by the Word made flesh. From that time on, the way Christians show they are ‘sanctified’ or ‘set apart’ from the rest of humanity is by the degree of trust they put in God’s Word and by obeying the commands of the One who gave them, first to the disciples and then through them to the rest of the world. The terms ‘word’ and ‘truth’ occur frequently in John’s gospel, with the two becoming joined in Jesus’ statement that He was ‘The Truth’. and His Spirit is the ‘Spirit of Truth’ who would remind the disciples of His words to them. In other words, the true word by which believers will be sanctified includes its unchangeable faithfulness, its reliability, its trustworthiness and its certainty. Because God’s word is our primary means of getting to know the Person and works of God and of bringing us closer to Him through that knowledge, it was absolutely essential that the disciples should base their testimony and ministry on the strength and truthfulness of all that Jesus had taught them.

But within a very short time we see the disciples as flawed individuals who fell asleep rather than watch with Him. Later, one of would deny Jesus with curses and oaths and the others would desert Him. They were flawed men and in our human opinion their actions were anything but sanctified. But we have to remember that at this stage they had not received the Holy Spirit. Until Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, they as yet had not been reminded of everything Jesus had taught them. Nor would they have fully understood the events of those three Easter days. But when the Spirit came at Pentecost, these same men turned the world upside down with the gospel message. This is what Jesus gives them credit for in His prayer. Jesus considers them already ‘set apart’ for He credits them with obeying God’s word in verse 6, words which they had accepted (v8). The words He spoke as coming from the lips of God Himself were already at work at the core of their being and their future ministry would reveal this to the world. That was why Jesus could pray for them as He did.

HOLY WEEK

Much more could be said about all that Jesus has included in His prayer, but it seems that stressing the importance of God's words, which have reached us as a result of the apostolic ministry is a fitting climax to what Jesus taught before His crucifixion. I don't mean to be presumptuous, but the very fact that we are here now, where we are making God's word a priority use of our time and energies, makes this a sanctifying experience. And in taking this time out for God we are giving Him the glory that was of paramount concern for Jesus. As He has taught us, it is a glory shared in equal measure by God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It is a glory the Godhead was prepared to share first with the disciples and then with all believers. Belief in Jesus was the means by which a personal relationship would be established - a personal relationship which would give peace and joy to believers, all of which would be cemented by love which Jesus links with His commands - and God's word shows us the way.

John 14:21

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

Within a few hours the love of which Jesus speaks will reach its zenith as He dies on a cross for the forgiveness of the sins of an undeserving humanity and for its redemption enabling its acceptance into the family of God.

Looking back on all that Jesus said in that upper room and especially the petitions in His final prayer which precisely identified the needs of the disciples and all future believers, is cause for amazement at how He could put aside His own needs as He faced a horrific death. "I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene" is an appropriate initial response. But with further reflection on all that was said and prayed, as we approach Easter, perhaps a more appropriate response is that of worship.

*Man of Sorrows! What a name for the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!*

*Lifted up was He to die, "It is finished", was His cry;
now in heaven exalted high;
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!*

HOLY WEEK