

7. John 13-14

Jesus and 'his own'

A.W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*

D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*

Tom Wright, *John for Everyone*

1.1 – 1.18	1.19 – 12.50	13:1 – 20:21	21.1-21.25
Prologue	Book of Signs: Jesus' Ministry	Book of Passion : Cross and Resurrection	Epilogue

1. Introduction - 13: 1-3

- **Withdrawal from the outside world** – Jesus is with the twelve disciples. Critics & interested observers are no longer present. Not only physical separation, also symbolic of the intrinsic but unseen separation of his disciples from the world in which they live.
- **Before the Passover Feast** – It's the night before Jesus, the true Passover lamb, was crucified. This is a clear reference to Jesus' imminent death and the representation of this event that is the Passover.
- **The time had come**
- **Jesus is leaving this world (and his disciples) behind**, and is preparing them for this. You can see throughout these chapters that he has in full view 'his own' (the disciples) on one hand, and heaven (homeward-bound), on the other.
- **'His own'** - The closeness and nature of his relationship with them is shown in the simple phrase John uses.
- **He loved them 'to the end'** – to the uttermost / eternally / to the farthest extent of his grace and their need (Pink). There was nothing that his love could do for them that it didn't do now.
- **The betrayal was already planted in Judas' heart** – what a contrast with Jesus' utter love in the previous sentence!
- **Jesus knew everything** – he knew who he was, where he had come from, where he was going, and that Father God had put *all things* under his power.

2. Washing the disciples' feet - 13: 4-17

In the light of the backdrop that John has painted, this episode is simply stunning.

- **It is a practical demonstration of Jesus' love** – it is indiscriminate (v 11 “for he knew the one who was betraying him”)
- **It shows us what God looks like (cf chapter 14: 8-9)** – stooped down at the feet of his followers (students and subordinates) dressed as a

slave, serving them by washing their dirty feet, taking on the job that was too degrading for them to do for each other. It's as if God knew that humans could not understand how far God had lowered himself in order to be born and live on earth as a man – he had to do the most degrading task, even by man's standards, for the point to hit home.

- **The act is 'made of the same cloth' as the cross** – it represents what Jesus was about to do in dying at the hands of his enemies: the love, the humiliation, the service, the choice to surrender.
- **It profoundly challenges the disciples' expectations** – they think that the Messiah should look and act like a ruler of this world. Jesus exposes their fundamental misunderstanding of God's plans and the messianic prophecies with which they were so familiar.
- **Dialogue with the disciples is used to explain key truths**
 - **Washing is symbolic of the cleansing that is required to come into communion with God.** A Jewish priest could not approach the presence of God until he had washed himself, and a wash bowl stood in the temple between the altar and the sanctuary for this purpose. 'Part' is a word often used to refer to inheritance, or spiritual blessings, or belonging to Jesus Christ or to the people of God.
 - **Only their feet, and not the whole of them, needed washing** - This is symbolic of the fact that we are washed and made righteous by the *blood* of Jesus once for all time, but we still need to wash off the spiritual grime and dirt that attaches itself to us along our daily walk. Pink summarises this second 'washing' as the 'practical purification of the heart and ways from all that defiles and hinders our communion with God'.
- **Do what I do (13-17)** – 'Teacher' and 'Lord' were signs of respect. Now that they have seen Jesus do this, how crazy would they be to think they were above the same task that he had seen fit to do? Jesus didn't mean literally that Christians should all wash each other's feet - the language used indicates that Jesus was setting a pattern for them to follow. His instruction is meant for general and continuous application to their attitudes towards each other.

3. **Betrayal – 13: 18-32**

- **Judas was among those that Jesus had chosen** – there hadn't been any mistake.
- **Psalm 41** – Jesus quotes one of the less 'glorious' messianic prophecies. The fact that Judas has had dinner with Jesus makes his betrayal deeper in the near-Eastern culture, because of the high value placed on hospitality and courtesy. An intimate friend was about to betray him.

- **Jesus is laying the groundwork** – so that when it happens they will believe (14:29). He knows that they are going to struggle, that they will not understand until they see him resurrected and the Holy Spirit is given to them, but he tells them enough to hold them together until that day.
- **“I am he”** – Jesus’ claim to be Yahweh, “I am”.
- **The other disciples still don’t understand**
- **Glorification of the Son of Man, of God in him and of in himself** – it’s a strange moment for Jesus to point this one out! The ultimate moment of self-disclosure was actually found in the shame of the Cross. The term ‘Son of Man’ was associated with glory and with suffering. Jesus is seeking to strengthen the faith of his disciples for the darkest hour of all.

4. **Love, comfort and more love – 13: 33 to 14: 31**

- **It’s a discourse** – so although each verse has profound depth in its own right, they are recorded together for a good reason, and there are important links between each element of this passage.
- **Context** – Jesus’ time with the disciples is fast coming to an end, only a few hours left (if that).
- **He gives them a new commandment – to love one another as he has loved them.** Remember that he knows the whole story – that once he has accomplished his mission, his disciples would be left behind to complete it – to make disciples of all nations and see his kingdom come on earth as in heaven. Here Jesus begins his instructions on how they should live after his departure. And of all the things he could leave them by way of an instruction manual, he chooses this first of all. There’s a limit to how much he can impart, especially when they are so slow to understand, so one commentator suggests that Jesus is here telling them the things that will hold them together in the right place until the Holy Spirit comes.

It is a *new* commandment because Jesus has redefined ‘love’ by his example. And it will be in the context of a new ‘order’ following His death and resurrection.

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples” – not by our doctrine / spiritual-ness / wisdom / prayer life / spiritual gifts / teaching / morality / fruitfulness / frequency of attendance at church, but by our sacrificial love for each other. The new messianic community will be characterised by a unity that is designed to reflect Jesus’ relationship with the Father.

- **Peter’s exclamation: the misapprehension and the irony** - Jesus has started to teach them in preparation for his leaving, but the disciples are still trying to ‘catch up’. Peter reveals their lack of understanding regarding Jesus’ mission, as only Jesus can be the

sacrifice that will deal with the world's sin. There's also irony in his words – after all, who is actually going to lay down their life for the other?

- **“Do not let your hearts be troubled”**. The basis of their fear is lack of belief/trust in God (14: 1, 10-11, 27).
- **The comfort Jesus gives to his disciples:**
 1. He assured them where he was going - to the Father's house (i.e. heaven) (14:2).
 2. He would make provision for them to follow him there (14:2). The best translation is 'dwelling places' or rooms. (cf. 14:23)
 3. He would come back to get them (14:3).
 4. He had made the way for them, had told them the way and would give them the energy to get there. (14:4-6). Jesus is the way to God because he is also the truth of God and the life of God.
 5. His miraculous powers would not be withdrawn from them, but would enable them to do greater things (14:12)
 6. Whatever they needed and asked for in his name would be given to them (14:13-14)
 7. A divine person would come to fill the place of Jesus as their instructor, guide, protector, consoler (14:16)
 8. They would not be left as orphans (14:18).
 9. They would one day understand the oneness of life shared by the Father, his Son and them (14:19-20)
 10. He would show himself to those who keep his commandments (14:23)
 11. Those who keep his word will be loved by the Father (14:23-24)
 12. The Holy Spirit would help them to remember everything that Jesus had said to them (14:26). (NB The first generation Christians began the Church, and the gospels were written through this knowledge from the Holy Spirit)
 13. He left Peace with them and gave Peace to them (reconciliation and freedom from turmoil) (14: 27). Peace is a fundamental characteristic of the messianic kingdom in the old and new testaments.
 14. Satan is coming, but he has no hold on Him (14:30)
 15. This is all part of the Father's plan (14:31)

“Follow me. I am the way and the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow; the truth which thou must believe; the life for which thou must hope. I am the inviolable way; the infallible truth; the never-ending life. I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; life true, life blessed, life uncreated”
Thomas à Kempis

- **Jesus and the Father are one** (14: 1, 7-11). In fact, Jesus is the complete revelation of God. "Take hold of Jesus as a man and you will discover that He is God" (Martin Luther). And the works (emphasis is on miracles) that Jesus did were those of the Father. And therefore they are signs that he is the Christ.
- **Greater things?** (14:12) – The first sentence refers specifically to Jesus' miracles – Jesus is reassuring them that the miracles would not end, but the disciples will continue to do these after Jesus has gone.

The second sentence misses out the noun that goes with 'greater' (leaving commentators to have a field day as to the meaning!). Pink: Jesus was not referring to 'greater miracles' in the technical sense, but to something else in magnitude and importance that would exceed the miracles. Carson: what the disciples did after the resurrection was part of a greater order than what had gone before the Cross. They both say that preaching the gospel to every nation and bringing about the birth and growth of the church is part of those 'greater things'.

It is clear that this is not a promise for just the twelve apostles, but for all believers. And it's 'shall', not 'might/can' do – there's no question as to amount of faith.

Spot the link (1) Jesus would give power to do the things they had seen him do, but they need to ask ...

- **"Whatever you ask in my name I will do"** – Doing something 'in the name of' someone else means looking beyond the person who presents the request and seeing who the request is coming from. Therefore, 'in my name' means standing in the place of Jesus, fully identified with him, asking by virtue of our union with him, asking according to what he wants, promoting the interests that Jesus has at heart. But this wasn't meant to be a restriction, but an encouragement to the disciples – Jesus is calling them to increased confidence as he is going away. Prayer will remove all sense of distance and bring them into his presence at any time.

Spot the link (2) not in their own strength ... to enable them to do these things Jesus will ask the Father to send another Helper ...

5. **The Comforter (Parakletos)**

- **From the Latin 'com' (alongside) and 'fortis' (strength).** This was a divine person who would come alongside them and give them strength for the tough times ahead.

- **In other places the same word is translated 'Advocate'.** (Legal advisor, someone who pleads on behalf of and is representative of another). Jesus does this on the cross. He also continues to plead our cause before God in heaven (cf 1 John 2:1). But the Spirit pleads God's cause with us here on earth.
- **Substitute for Jesus.** He came to fill the place of Jesus Christ and to continue to do the things Jesus had done with and for them.
- **With them forever** (14:16)
- **He will be within you (14: 17).** Don't expect a visible person. Jesus says that he will be in them through the Spirit – There's a profound mystery in the Trinity. Through use of the same language in verse 20 as in verse 11 Jesus intimates that just as he and the Father are in communion, when the Spirit comes and lives in them they also, through the Spirit, will be part of this union.
- **Spirit of Truth.** He will teach them and will remind them of the teachings of Jesus (14:17).
- **Continuation of Jesus demonstrating his 'love unto the end' –** there's an underlying reassurance that his love for them will not diminish because he is leaving, and will continue to be exercised on their behalf because he is going to the Father.
- **Obedience and love are integral parts of this new union between the Father, Jesus, the Spirit and the disciples.** (14:21 and 23) Jesus switches between 'commandments' (15 and 21) and more general word 'teachings' or 'word' (23 and 24), which Carson suggests indicates a holistic interpretation i.e. Jesus wants them to observe the whole revelation of Christ, rather than taking each commandment individually.
- **Separates Jesus' disciples from the world** (14: 17, 19, 22-24). Judas' question shows that he is still missing the point. His misunderstanding stems from a fundamentally erroneous expectation both of what the Messiah would accomplish and how. God can only have fellowship with those who love him and demonstrate this by submission to his word.