

How to love Jesus

How Jesus last words in John 13-17 can help us

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The answer to our challenge, How to Love Jesus is clearly answered where Jesus tells us clearly.....

- “If you really love me, you will keep the commandments.” John 14:15
- Sounds simple, though certainly not easy to do
- But to truly understand and apply it, let’s look at this section of chapters in John 13-17 where the Apostle John shares with us a very detailed account of what Jesus said to his disciples before he died

Here is the setting....Imagine if you knew you were going to die in the next 24 hours

- And you knew how it would happen—that it would be a shameful, painful death
- Adding to the pain....that you’d be betrayed by a trusted friend and your remaining friends would run away
- That’s what it’s like for Jesus when he joined his disciples for the Passover meal.

If you knew those things

- What would you do? What would you say
- Like any teacher, Jesus would want to pass on his most important lessons to his disciples
- They were the ones who would carry his message to the world
- These last lessons would be incredibly important, so he taught by both
- His actions
- His words
- Are all recorded for us in John 13-17 by his disciple John, who gives the most detailed description of that night, what we call “the Last Supper” and what followed it

Bit of intro: Many favorite and oft-quoted verses are in this section

- And like so many other “popular” passages quoted out of context
- Context is so important
- The more I study, the more I see that it is
- Not just so you won’t grab a passage totally out of context and believe or teach something that is totally wrong
- But you need the BIG PICTURE context **to truly understand**, to get the full meaning of the passage you are focused on now

What is the BIG PICTURE here?

- All of human history to this point was preparation for what Jesus was going to accomplish by his death
- The purpose of the events to come would be to heal the breach broken between God and humanity when Adam decided to go his own way instead of obeying God
- His death would be the final atonement, the covering, the payment, the satisfaction for sin that thousands of years of sacrificing innocent lambs prefigured.
- It was also the start of a new definition for the people of God whose identity as defined in a narrow ethnic with

the **Jewish race** who were entrusted to be his messengers broadening to the future **Church** that would encompass people of every color and race

Jesus fully aware of the significance and shortness of this time

- Matthew Henry, the Bible commentator says that Jesus was “setting his house in order”
- He knew he was leaving and wanted to finally equip those who would be carrying on his work
- No words of self-pity, self-focus
- People show who they really are when under pressure—Jesus knew that he was facing, but this entire section focused on others and what was important for them to remember
- He could do that because****and don’t miss these verses that set up this section:
- John 13:3 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. (end...Gk: telios...completeness, perfection, all that can be done—loved them completely without reservation)
- ²The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; he got up.....
- **and proceeds to wash their feet**

Jesus could do what He needed to do for the disciples’ sake because

- He knew God was in control
- Even now, when shortly a friend would betray him
- And his entire world would collapse
- He could do what God wanted him to do and be the teacher who loved and taught until the very end

APPLICATION time

- The same God, who gave Jesus the strength to do and say all he did in his last earthly hours is the same God who is in control of our lives
- He has a plan for each of us
- We may not know BIG things for our lives, like Jesus knew the Father’s plan for him to die on the cross
- But we know daily (or I hope you will know better after listening to this podcast) how we should live
- One of the biggest challenges in life is to learn to be obedient in the situation we are in RIGHT NOW
- To learn not to be distracted from doing what is right no matter how difficult things might be
- ****There will always be the “when this happens....then I will obey, or trust or do whatever we know God wants us to do,” but we keep putting off obedience if our obedience is conditional
- We need to keep doing what God wants us to in little things always and in the big things as clearly as we see—no matter what our circumstances
- And Jesus is going to model this for us

Back to the story – right now it’s 12 men with Jesus about to start a party

- The disciples have no idea that all of human history will turn on the pivot of what will happen in the next few days
- They were about to feast!
- Maybe it’s understandable that they no doubt hadn’t had food like this in a long time and so were ready to eat
- But one very important socially important task hadn’t been done
- Nobody had washed their feet

Why feet washing was important

- Background--it was usually done by a servant as people came in
- Long dusty walks with open sandals
- All that was needed was there: pitcher of water, bowl, towels for drying
- But apparently no one did it
- They may have been arguing about who was the greatest—that determined where they would sit and arguing about that washing someone’s feet totally out of the question
- Regardless, Jesus very intentionally gets up, set’s aside his outer garment, wraps a towel around himself and proceeds to wash their feet

When finished he tells them why

- ¹²⁻¹⁷ When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his clothes, he sat down and spoke to them, “Do you realize what I have just done to you? You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘Lord’ and you are quite right, for I am your teacher and your Lord. But if I, your teacher and Lord, have washed your feet, you must be ready to wash one another’s feet. I have given you this as an example so that you may do as I have done. Believe me, the servant is not greater than his master and the messenger is not greater than the man who sent him. Once you have realized these things, you will find your happiness in doing them.
- John 13:12-17 J.B. Phillips New Testament (PHILLIPS)
- Being great (Jesus was) doesn’t mean you need to act great. Phil 2:2 tells us that Jesus though in “very nature God, emptied himself”
- Results of this if we follow his lead...we will be happy/blessed
- Other translations use the word “blessed” if you do this, can mean to “speak well of” e.g. “blessed be God” or happy as in this passage
- It seldom seems like it ahead of time, but some of our greatest joys can be when we serve others
- Can be challenging in different ways for different people: e.g. serving parents in their last days—my story, anyone who volunteers in any way-
- If we try to be a big deal—no one ever appreciates it as much as we want
- But when we serve—we get unexpected joy

The evening moves on

- Jesus says one will betray him and Judas leaves to do that
- Other disciples think he’s gone out to get something
- Point here

- Jesus washed Judas feet—the man who would betray him ultimately and Peter’s feet, one who would deny him and run away, and all the others who vowed to die for him, but who he knew would run away also
- Lesson to all of us—we never have an excuse not to serve
- We will probably never be faced with the challenge of serving a person who will be the cause of our death
- But we might be with someone who does not make our life easy—many examples
- When in people like that, remember Jesus and ask for his help, ask to help see your eternal calling, and your destiny
- The pettiness of the person is never the point, whether they deserve it or not is never the point. The point is...how can we be more like Jesus?

The reason why this is so important

- “And so I am giving a new commandment to you now—love each other just as much as I love you. Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” John 13:34-35 Living Bible (TLB)
- Unselfish acts of love say more than the most loudly spoken words
- *You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day, by the things that you do and the words that you say. People read what you write distorted or true, what is the gospel according to you?*

Back to the disciples...they are upset; betrayal talked about 2x—Judas and even Peter

- So Jesus says:
- “Let not your heart be troubled. You are trusting God, now trust in me. There are many homes up there where my Father lives, and I am going to prepare them for your coming. When everything is ready, then I will come and get you, so that you can always be with me where I am. If this weren’t so, I would tell you plainly. And you know where I am going and how to get there.” John 14:1-4
- Clarify “mansions” Father’s house *oikia*—either translated dwellings or the family that inhabits them
- Many Homes *monē*—again a dwelling or the act of dwelling there
- No scriptural support for big mansions for each individual person
- The point of what Jesus said is that he is going to prepare a place for them and he will come back and take them to be with him—certain it will be far more wonderful than some earthly mansion

But that brings up another problem—for them and one of the biggest challenges for Christianity today

- “No, we don’t,” Thomas said. “We haven’t any idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus told him, “I am the Way—yes, and the Truth and the Life. No one can get to the Father except by means of me. John 14:5-6
- Context of fear and confusion with Jesus about to leave them
- But Jesus takes it out of the present moment for a clarification of who he is and that he is the only way to God

- Very offensive then and now

Offensive because.....

- Every person in every age wants to connect with God
- It's how that is the question because at the core, we want to do it our way
- In the ancient world—lots of options
- Many family, tribal spirits, spirits to worship if you belonged to a guild
- Civic religion—in Egypt, the Pharaoh was “god”
- In Rome the Emperor was “god”
- In addition, in every culture “mystery religions” –these appealed more to the senses, lots of music and ceremony, in some complex rights, feasting, sacrifice, ritual sex
- The point is that you could belong to as many as you could afford to belong to and if you could you tried to cover all your basis
- Religion was what suited you

Jesus definitively says “NO” to all that

- Jesus and he alone, he made clear is the only way to God
- For three years he'd lived with them and by the miracles that fulfilled specific OT prophecies showed them who he was—the long promised Messiah
- And he will shortly be fulfilling the most important prophecy of all in his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead
- Side note: read Matthew marking all the places where it says, “this was done to fulfill.....”
- He reminds them that in the past 3 years in all they have seen, they have seen God at work in his work:
- Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say are not my own but are from my Father who lives in me. And he does his work through me.¹¹ Just believe it—that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or else believe it because of the mighty miracles you have seen me do. John 14:10-11, TLB
- And because Jesus is God's representative, his incarnation on earth, only HE can be the way to God

It only makes sense—it's personal

- He talked about going to prepare a place for us
- Heaven is God's house, Jesus house
- If you are going to live with someone for a very long time—and eternity is as long as it gets, you can't just barge in acting however you want
- You need to know the homeowner—not some great theological construct—one of the simplest of human interactions
- Which, when we understand this, challenging and terrifying passages like in Matt. 7 where at the last judgement people talk about doing all kinds of miracles—Jesus not impressed and turns them away with the simple statement, “I never knew you”
- Which leads back to the key question –not only how to know Jesus but how to love him

Not a secret, Jesus tells us in John 14:15

- “If you really love me, you will keep the commandments” Phillips, NIV, KJV
- “If you love me, obey me” New Living

- “If you love me, show it by doing what I've told you.” Message
- He repeats this idea numerous times
- John 14:21 The one who obeys me is the one who loves me; and because he loves me, my Father will love him; and I will too, and I will reveal myself to him.” NLB
- John 14:23 “Because a loveless world,” said Jesus, “is a sightless world. If anyone loves me, he will carefully keep my word and my Father will love him—we'll move right into the neighborhood! Not loving me means not keeping my words. MSG
- Not asking more of us than what he did
- But so the world might know how thoroughly I love the Father, I am carrying out my Father's instructions right down to the last detail. Jn. 14:31

How to love Jesus?

- Keep his commands; obey his teaching
- We've got to know what it is
- That's why we must read, listen to, study, memorize, think about what is in the Bible—how can we know what it means to SERVE, really serve others if we aren't familiar with the story he John13—we certainly won't learn that from popular culture
- He doesn't leave us wondering or guessing—these passages and all the Bible tell us
- And to help us understand what we read, we aren't alone
- John 14:26 I have said all this while I am still with you. But the one who is coming to stand by you, (the Advocate, the Comforter) the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will be your teacher and will bring to your minds all that I have said to you.

How it works in practical ways

- You read, you study, you listen to podcasts like this— all that content seeps into your heart and mind
- The more you learn, the better you will understand how God thinks, what he wants you to do
- Invariable you will be confronted with a challenging situation.
- You ask God what to do and often the Holy Spirit will call a verse or a biblical principle to mind to answer or guide you
- Then you have a choice—because the world will almost always have a more appealing and opposite answer
- Are you going to love Jesus and grow in your relationship to him by obeying.
- I pray so—that you will obey and grow.

A final verse for this section

- Along with the promise of the Comforter being sent to them, we have another promise:
- “I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart! And the peace I give isn't fragile like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid.” John 14:27
- Does not say all challenges will be removed—but peace in them

One man's story (from website cited below)

- Horatio G. Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago with a lovely family - a wife, Anna, and five children. . . . Their young son died with

pneumonia in 1871, and in that same year, much of their business was lost in the great Chicago fire. Yet, God in His mercy and kindness allowed the business to flourish once more.

- On Nov. 21, 1873, the French ocean liner, Ville du Havre was crossing the Atlantic from the U.S. to Europe with 313 passengers on board. Among the passengers were Mrs. Spafford and their four daughters. Although Mr. Spafford had planned to go with his family, he found it necessary to stay in Chicago to help solve an unexpected business problem. . . .
- About four days into the crossing of the Atlantic, the Ville du Harve collided with a powerful, iron-hulled Scottish ship, the Loch Earn. Suddenly, all of those on board were in grave danger. Anna hurriedly brought her four children to the deck. She knelt there with Annie, Margaret Lee, Bessie and Tanetta and prayed that God would spare them if that could be His will, or to make them willing to endure whatever awaited them. Within approximately 12 minutes, the Ville du Harve slipped beneath the dark waters of the Atlantic, carrying with it 226 of the passengers including the four Spafford children.
- A sailor, rowing a small boat over the spot where the ship went down, spotted a woman floating on a piece of the wreckage. It was Anna, still alive. He pulled her into the boat and they were picked up by another large vessel which, nine days later, landed them in Cardiff, Wales. From there she wired her husband a message which began, "Saved alone, what shall I do?"
- Another of the ship's survivors, Pastor Weiss, later recalled Anna saying, "God gave me four daughters. Now they have been taken from me. Someday I will understand why."

His response

- Mr. Spafford booked passage on the next available ship and left to join his grieving wife. With the ship about four days out, the captain called Spafford to his cabin and told him they were over the place where his children went down.
- According to ...a daughter born after the tragedy, Spafford wrote the hymn "It Is Well With My Soul" while on this journey.
- ***When peace like a river attendeth my way,***
- ***When sorrows like sea billows roll,***
- ***Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,***
- ***It is well, it is well with my soul.***
- <https://www.staugustine.com/article/20141016/LIFESTYLE/310169936>

This is the Peace Jesus gives us

- And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, shall keep your hearts, your minds through Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:7
- It may not be easy to love Jesus by taking time to learn his commands and to obey them, but the gift of his love and peace no matter what the storms of life and the promise of forever with him make any efforts on our part more than worth it.
- Next lesson we'll learn more practical ways to live, to

love Jesus, so that we can always say:

- It is well with my soul