

## Gospel of John - episode 27

### Chapter 13 part 4 & chapter 14

Welcome to our reflection on chapter 13 of John's Gospel. We're coming towards the end of Chapter 13 now, and I want to pick up in 13:32. Verse 30 said that night had fallen, and therefore this terrible hour of Jesus' Death is upon us. Jesus' reaction is very interesting. He says in verse 31, "Now the hour has come. Now has the Son of Man been glorified, and in him God has been glorified". The word 'glorified' means 'fully manifested'. John will show us as we proceed that everything we know about Jesus will be publicly manifested during the events of the Passion in a most extraordinary manner. So, the hour has come. It looks like Satan's hour because Judas has gone out to betray Jesus, but in actual fact, it is God's kairos time, God's chosen time for intervention in human affairs to bring about the Redemption of the world. It's the time when love will conquer hatred and life conquer death. Jesus immediately begins his Final Discourse at the end of this chapter. He waited until Judas had left - until the darkness had left, and only love was left in the Cenacle.

So, with Judas' departure, hatred and rejection left also. What we have now is an atmosphere full of love. Jesus, surrounded by love begins to not just reveal himself, but also to reveal who they are, and who they will be in the future. In other words, we have the extraordinary revelation of the reality and the mystery of the church given now. Distress left the room with Judas. When Jesus leaves this room at the end of the Farewell Discourse, he will go out into the darkness of Gethsemane, where Light will be confronted by darkness and the great clash of the Titans will take place. Light goes into the darkness, and the darkness thinks it can overcome the light, but it can't. John said in chapter 1:5, that Jesus is a light that shines in the darkness, a light that the darkness cannot overpower. He also tells us in 1:9, that the Word is the true light that enlightens all people. These extraordinary events will enlighten us regarding Jesus' identity and who we are in him.

This long night has fallen. It has already begun; it will be a long night not only for Jesus and for the disciples, but also for all humanity. It will have a wonderful dawn on the third day, the first day of the New Era, the day that we will call Easter Sunday, God's own day, but first things first! Let's deal with what the issue is. The issue is love for this new community of the beloved disciples. Jesus addresses a company of men, some of whom, like Peter, are older than himself, and he says, "My little children, I shall not be with you much longer. You will look for me, and as I told the Jews (that means the Jewish leaders), Where I am going, you cannot come, (because Jesus is going into Death and Resurrection). I give you a new commandment. (In Latin, of course, that is Mandatum; that's why Holy Thursday is called Mandi Thursday). I give you a new commandment, love one another, just as I have loved you". Now, love one another by itself is one thing, but to love one another as Jesus loved us is a different matter altogether.

That is going to be explained to us. "You are to love one another just as I have loved you. So, in the same way, you must love each other. By this love - that means that among us there will be God's divine love, his agape love - by this love that you have for one another everyone will know that you are my disciples".

This is going to be the distinguishing mark of the church. Everybody will recognise this particular community. So, let's look at this. The atmosphere completely changes once Judas leaves. The extraordinary thing is that tension departs, love takes over, and they are all unified. Jesus calls them little children for several reasons. The Synoptic Gospels reveal that we are all the brothers and sisters of Jesus in this new family that is the Church. He is the Father of this family. We are little children in terms of spirituality; we have not grown to become great saints yet. Also, the Passover was celebrated in the context of family, and the head (Jesus is the head), was called the father of the family, and all the other participants, no matter who they were, are called the children of the family.

So, he can call them his children from different aspects. Many commentators have spoken about the Final Discourse of Jesus; they tell us that it surpasses in nobility and majesty anything that you can read anywhere else. Also, anything that you can read, even also in the Ministry of Jesus, because when Jesus gave his discourses in the first half of the Gospel, very often it was to hostile audiences, so, the wonder and the glory of his divine love couldn't shine as clearly as it shines here. It shines here so brightly that you almost become blinded by it. This particular discourse is very bright because Jesus is speaking to his own - to the beloved disciples. He is speaking to the ones who, in spite of their weaknesses and in spite of all that will happen in the next 24 hours, they will come back, they will be restored to him, and they will be the men who will take this message to the ends of the Earth.

We must grasp from the very beginning that the discourse of Jesus is on the level of above. It's absolutely 'light years' away from the level of below. If you are not reading it on the level of above, you just won't get what is being said at all. I'll do my best to give it to you on the level of above. As you begin to hear the Final Discourse coming from Jesus, you realise that he is speaking in time, in other words, to the twelve, and he is speaking in a timelessness as well, 'out of time', because he is speaking to all generations of his beloved disciples to the very end of time. Also, when John wrote this text, Jesus was already in heaven, and so he is with us, and he is in heaven at the same time. We are drawn up onto this higher level in a very special way. We are at the last supper, but we are also in heaven, and we have this strange feeling of being pulled up to this very high place. As Jesus begins to give us his Final Discourse, he is beginning to let go of the limitations of time and to lay down his life and to enter into the timelessness of the Resurrection.

He has already prepared us for this. In chapter 12:24, Jesus said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, It remains only a single grain. But if it dies, it will produce a rich harvest". So, now the time has come for the grain to die. The challenge which Jesus gives to the Apostles, and to us, of course, is that we must learn how to live this heavenly life on Earth and to become icons of Jesus as he was an icon of the Father. We must live it in the midst of the unbelieving world, which is quite difficult, but we will live it as his ambassadors. That is 2 Corinthians 5:20. It's all about love. Everything in the Kingdom of God is about love. Everything in our relationship with Jesus is about love. The great issue is love. So, the new Christian lifestyle that Jesus will describe, is love. He will give it to us from chapter 13 right through to chapter 17. So, he says, "I give you a new commandment", but they already knew they should love one another. The bit that's completely new is that you are to love one another "in the same way as I've loved you". That's completely new.

When you go back to the Covenant of Moses, Deuteronomy 6:4-10 gives the Shema Israel, the daily prayer of every Jew. You hear that God has the right to demand exclusive love from the people He has redeemed. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with your entire being". Exclusive love given totally and completely to God. They were also asked to give love to their Israeli neighbours and to anybody who might be living among them as strangers. So, It was very limited. In other words, there were other nations you could hate. Jesus is completely different to that. He raises the level so high that there is no one you can hate, no one at all. You must love everyone, but love isn't a feeling or an emotion; love isn't a Passion. This love is a decision in our innermost being to give ourselves to God and to others. So, the essence of the Christian life is love. Jesus will give it to us very clearly in John 15:9. This one command of Jesus replaces the 10 commandments of Moses. Now, why does 1 replace 10?

In Matthew chapter 22:37-40, Jesus was asked, "what is the greatest commandment of the law?" Out of all the 10 Commandments, he chose, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your being, and you shall love your neighbour as yourself". Then he added: "on this, hangs the whole law and the prophets". Now, the expression that something 'hangs on' was used by the rabbis in all their discussions. They would say, that such and such a principle hangs on such and such a text. Jesus says, the entire Bible, hangs on the law of love because God is love. This is the essence of everything. This is the centre. So, if you have no love, we are nothing in at all. Why is Jesus going to speak about a very special love? Because he is sending these ordinary men (who have their faults and failings like everybody else) out into an unbelieving world full of hatred, evil and all that's wrong in the world of unbelief and sin, and they will have to transform it.

Now, they can't transform it with human love. It's not possible. The only way you can transform the Cosmos is with divine love. This is this unconditional, self-sacrificing, self-giving love in which you don't ask for thanks, payment or even for a response. It's the sheer privilege of loving this way, loving like Jesus that will bring about the transformation of the world. This will be the hallmark of the existence of the church, because this love is not out there in the Cosmos. They know nothing about it. It is utterly amazing for them to witness a person giving without seeking recognition in return. So, it is this self-sacrificing love that the Lord wants for his church. Now, in the Old Covenant, they celebrated the glories of the first Exodus and the first Passover, but from now on, it will be the glories of Jesus' Passover that will be celebrated by the church for all time because Jesus will give us a New Covenant that will be signed in his own blood. Luke tells us that in chapter 22:20.

You need to understand that what Jesus tells us in the Final Discourse is the fulfilment of what Jeremiah foretold in chapter 31:31-34, in which he promised that everybody would know God personally, and they would be taught by God. In the Cenacle everybody is not only knowing God personally, God is personally present to them in Jesus, and they all have an extraordinary relationship with him. He is offering them everything that he was given himself for his Mission. His generosity in sharing everything with them is just extraordinary. These disciples are going to discover that the way that love was lived in the past was very human, very limited, because you could love your friends and hate your enemies. Jesus says, NO! That's

not the way any longer. You must treat everybody, friend, and foe, as a friend. You must love your enemies and do good to those who hate you and bless those who curse you. It's going to be completely different. But if we are to love like Jesus, we have to understand that you love the other person knowing their faults and failings. You love them with a love that's laced with forgiveness. That's just the way it is with people because as long as we're on Earth, we are faulty human beings. Let me finish by talking about the final shock that in chapter 13:36-38. Don't you think we've had enough? There's one more. Simon Peter speaks up. "Lord, where are you going? Jesus said, Where I'm going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow me later. Peter said to him, Why can't I follow you now?" (like a child saying to the parent, why can't I come with you?) I would lay down my life for you. Jesus said, Lay down your life for me? I tell you most solemnly before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times". There's not a sound out of the other 10. Not a sound! They must have been totally shocked! Surely it was bad enough to hear about Judas; now they hear that Peter will deny the Lord as well.

This is the terribly important. Peter is still on the level of below. He thinks that he should be able to go wherever Jesus goes; that he should be able to physically accompany him. He's not hearing that Jesus is speaking on a different plane altogether. Poor Peter doesn't grasp that there is a journey which only Jesus can take, that Jesus must go alone into his Passion, unaccompanied, all alone, with nobody helping him, when he will save the world by his own love. Peter won't have added anything to it.

There are some lessons I want to give you before I finish. Peter must learn a few lessons, and it is good if we learn them also. 1): What does following Jesus mean? We are going to see when Jesus is put under trial that Peter will follow him, but in the wrong way. Following Jesus is not something physical. That's what Peter is saying. Why can't I follow you now? Following Jesus is spiritual. To follow Jesus, we must imbibe his Word. We must internalise it and make it our own.

We must feed on the Eucharist (John 6), and abandon the Cosmos, the unbelieving world. We have got to put ourselves in a position in which we are in the Kingdom of God, not following the principles of the world. It is hard to be in the world and not of it. We must leave our own egocentric self; it must go; let it die, and allow divine love to be born in us. So, we must die to self and rise to a spiritual life. We will be tested just as Peter was tested. I hope we don't fail as much as Peter failed on this very first occasion. Only Jesus can lift us up to that level where we can actually glorify God in our lives. Peter has to learn what we must learn also - that is, if we are going to follow Jesus, we will be continuously in battle. First of all, you will be in battle with yourself. Secondly, you will be in battle with Satan, who won't want you to get to the top of the mountain. And thirdly, you'll be in battle with the world which thinks you're crazy. The world doesn't know where you're going. It doesn't even know where it's going itself.

Thank you for joining us. God bless you.

## **INTERVAL**

Welcome to our Reflection on the second half of John's Gospel. We are coming into Chapter 14 now, and coming into the depths of the final Farewell Discourse of Jesus. In Chapter 13, Jesus told the disciples that they were to imitate him; they were to copy him in a particular way of life. Jesus will now give them the new charter that he wants to lay down for his beloved disciples. I have to give you an introduction to this because the issues that we deal with in chapter 14 are much greater than appears on the surface. Our model is Jesus himself. I've said that already, but we have to look at it because Jesus said, 'You are to copy me'. If we go back to chapter 1:18 we were introduced to the Beloved Son, and told that he dwelt in the Bosom of the Father for all eternity.

This is what John said, "No one has ever seen God, but the only Begotten Son who is at the Father's side has made him known". So, there the Beloved Son was introduced as someone who had intimacy with God, the Father. All of this is essential for what I'm going to say in chapter 14, because Jesus is the model. Because he was at the Father's side, he was dwelling in absolute intimacy with God in the bosom of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus knew God, and therefore he was able to reveal God to humanity. You cannot reveal God if you don't know him. It's not possible. You can only give what you have. This relationship that Jesus had with the Father, was what gave him the authority to reveal the heart of God. In the first half of the Gospel the people responded to Jesus' teaching saying: "this is different; this is teaching with authority". He is not teaching like the scribes, quoting one another. This Beloved Son, who dwelt in intimacy with the Father for eternity, when he came to Earth lived a life of total, absolute surrender to the Father's Will.

His complete and total obedience to the Father is the model for us. We show our love for God with obedience. That's what Jesus means by, "If you love me, keep my Commandments". We will come back to that, and also to something he will tell us at the end of Chapter 14: "I want the world to know that I love the Father, and therefore I do exactly what my Father tells me". This obedience to the Father is one of the great issues for Jesus. His surrender to the Father's Will is the template for us. We must live daily, hourly surrender to the Father's Will because that allows God to reign in us and through us on the Earth. It is because of this surrender that God can reign on the Earth; He is free to set up his dwelling in us. That is the important thing. So, I had to give you that little summary because here in Chapter 14, we are introduced to the way of life that Jesus wants for his beloved disciples.

We were introduced to the beloved disciple of Jesus in 13:23, when we came into the second half of the book. The first half was all about Jesus, the Beloved Son. The second half, the Book of Glory, is all about the beloved disciples; their calling, their mission, where everything is to be the same as Jesus. That's the incredible thing. When we met the beloved disciple at the last supper, where was he? He was sitting beside Jesus just as Jesus was at the side of the Father for all eternity. He had his head on the heart of Jesus, indicating a personal, spiritual, loving, intimate relationship with Jesus, just as the Father had this

intimate, loving relationship with his Son. So here you see that one is modelling the other. This is what John is trying to say to us. Therefore, this particular beloved disciple is the model for us also. He is modelling himself on the Beloved Son. The beloved disciple isn't introduced to us until the Beloved Son is about to depart from the Earth, quite literally the night before.

Now, we know who this person is. He is John, the writer of the Gospel, but in his humility, he hides behind the title, beloved disciple. This person is John of Zebedee, who came from Capharnaum in Galilee; that he was the youngest of the Apostles, and he was the one who outlived them all. Nevertheless, why isn't he identified as this individual, John? It's because in the second half of the Gospel, John wants you to hear that the gift that he had from the beginning is the calling that all of us have. So, in the second half of the Gospel, the beloved disciple is not John, it's you and me. Each one of us must read our own calling, looking at the calling of the beloved disciple. Even though the original audience for the Final Discourse of Jesus was the faithful 11 disciples (no longer the 12). Yet what is said to them is the template for the whole Church for all time, for every generation. Every person baptised into Christ is called to an intimate, loving, personal relationship with Jesus in the Holy Spirit.

It is a most dreadful tragedy if someone who is baptised, confirmed and goes to Mass on Sunday, doesn't have a personal relationship with Jesus, because that personal relationship with Jesus is your inheritance. It is what you are supposed to have in order to call yourself Christian. It is essential for us to come into this personal relationship with Jesus. Now, if you are listening to me at this moment and you are aware that you don't have this relationship with Jesus, what are you going to do? Are you going to write yourself off? No. You simply turn to Jesus and ask him to open you up to this personal relationship. Tell him you want it. Because you can't have a personal relationship with another person unless you want it. If you indicate to him that you want it, he will open the way for you because he is the gate; he is the door. God loves all people equally. He is not a respecter of persons. What he has revealed here is for each person and for every generation throughout the whole night of history.

Now, Jesus himself, as I've said, is the template for the beloved disciples. So, his intimacy with the Father indicates that we are to have intimacy with Jesus in the Holy Spirit. Jesus goes even further than this in later revelations, where he says that we are called right into the bosom of the Father. We are called to have a Trinitarian life on Earth. We come through Jesus to the Father in the Holy Spirit. We come the whole way. This is what copying Jesus means when you are reading chapter 13:15. So The result of this person being in an intimate relationship with God in the Spirit means that Jesus actualized the presence of the Father on the Earth. As long as Jesus was Incarnate, God the Father was walking the roads of Palestine. If the Jewish people at the time had realised this, they would have been on their knees in adoration. The blindness of human beings is absolutely incredible. We have the same blindness because Jesus is present in our tabernacles, and we don't come in to our churches on our knees in adoration either. So, we won't blame them. Human beings are the same.

The reason why we need to understand this is because when we, the beloved disciples, come into this personal relationship with the Father through Jesus in the Spirit, then we actualize the presence of Jesus on the Earth. We even use this language, that person is very Christ-like. That means that they remind you

of Christ. Something that a person does reminds you of what Jesus does. So, we make the presence of Jesus present. We actualize it on the Earth. He continues his Mission through the beloved disciples. Now, if you understand the Old Testament, the Father had the Mission to bring His children back to Him, which Jesus encapsulated in his own life, in his incarnation, made present on the Earth. The beloved disciples pick this up from the Father, from Jesus in the Spirit and continue it, so that God is present on the Earth all the time. If God is present on the Earth, people can be healed and come back to God; they can recover from disasters in their lives. People can rise from the dead, spiritually. Eventually, we will arise from the dead, physically also.

So, the disciples coming into this relationship with the Father through Jesus in the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for the unbelieving world to ever be able to see God. This relationship means that the beloved disciples become a new people of God, and they become the dwelling place on Earth for the Holy Spirit. That is why you read in 1 Corinthians 3:16, “know you not that you are the temple of the living God, and that the Spirit of God is dwelling in you?” You personally are the temple of the living God, and you as a whole. We are inclined to make the mistake today of saying that the physical church in the village is the church. No, it is the people, the beloved disciples of Jesus. They are the church, and they meet in this building in order to worship God. In Luke's Gospel, chapter 17:21, Jesus says, “the Kingdom of God is within you”. Jesus has to conquer the Earth inside of each one of us individually, as if nobody else existed.

As each one of us surrenders to the Lord and allows him to reign in us, the Kingdom of God spreads. So, the beloved disciples are the Church. In case you have a structured image of the church as Pope, hierarchy, clergy and laity, I don't want you to have it. I want you to hear a living community. That's why I'm going to use the language that John uses, which is the community of the beloved disciples, because then we'll hear the spiritual call that is upon us. This community is able to impart the Holy Spirit to others because the Holy Spirit is dwelling within you. we can only give what you have. Because Jesus, our model, was in an intimate relationship with the Father, he was able to teach, heal, be the dispenser of grace, and he was able to give the living water of life, true life, spiritual life, to souls. That's exactly the calling of the beloved disciples, because we're in this special relationship with the Father through Jesus in the Spirit, we can teach his Word because it is inside of us. It's in our souls.

The amazing thing is, I've been teaching scripture for 60 years, and I can testify that if you teach the Word as it is meant to be taught, it resonates in the hearts of the hearers, and they are the ones who can confirm that you are actually teaching the Word of God. If you veer away from that, they discern quickly that this is not the Word of God. If the Word of God wasn't already lodged in our hearts, we couldn't pull it out because that's what teaching scripture is. We pull the Word of God up into your consciousness so that you can take it more and more deeply into yourself. Cf Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Of course, the living waters of grace are dispensed through the Sacraments so that they will live. The nourishment that the world needs in order to be able to live a spiritual life is also dispensed by this community because we give the nourishment of God's Holy Word and the nourishment of the Holy



Eucharist, and at the same time doing what Jesus himself did, which is to minister to the poor, the lame, the lepers and the marginalised in society; we take care of the ones who really need to be taken care of.

So, there is a spiritual ministry, and there is an ordinary ministry also. You don't separate one from the other. Just as Jesus was the defender of the weak and the poor, so the church, the community of the beloved disciples, also has that role. If the beloved disciples are doing the task that God intended them to do, the people who will proclaim the greatness of God are not the elites of the world. No, not them. It's the poor. It's the little the ones. It's the sick who have been healed. It's the depressed who have been restored. It's the lepers who have been cleansed. They are the ones who will give glory to God, and they are the ones who will stand up and take this message; they are the ones who will proclaim it in their own lives. So, our testimony has to be heard by the poor and the weak. Not only that, but as Jesus told us in Matthew chapter 5:14, the beloved disciples are also the light of the world. That means the light of truth goes out to others through the beloved disciples. This is also the light of wisdom. The light of all the fruits of the Spirit that come through us, go to them also, so, it is a mighty calling that is given to the beloved disciples.

So, to summarise this: the mysteries of the Life, Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus continues in the life, mission, suffering and glory of the community of the beloved disciples, or as we say, the church. So, our mission is great, but it can only be carried out by people who are in a personal relationship of love with the Father through Jesus in the Holy Spirit. That's extremely important. As we now go into the text itself, Jesus will speak about dwelling places. Where does he dwell? Where do you dwell? Where does the church dwell? So, if we only read it on a superficial level, we're not going to get the message at all.

This is chapter 14:1-2 "do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going now to prepare a place for you. And after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return, and I will take you with me, so that where I am, you may be, too".

Here you have a little summary, but there's an awful lot packed into the words. It's absolutely amazing. When we started out with the revelation of the betrayer, Jesus was troubled. When the revelation of the betrayal of Judas and the betrayal of Peter was revealed to them, their hearts were troubled. So, we'll begin in our next session talking about how Jesus removes the trouble from the disciples. That trouble will be removed when they understand something of the mystery that is going on.

Thank you for listening. Goodbye. God bless you.