**Follow the Leader:**

**Embodying the Scandalous Love of Christ**

**John 13:1-38 (ESV)**

March 25, 2018

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Our Senior Pastor, Ritch Boerckel, is not here with us today. He is not feeling well. He hopes to recover soon, but we ask that you would pray for him. He is sad to not be with us, but he is praying for us here. And that means that the notes in your bulletin do not correspond with the lesson that you are about to receive today. The lesson will be from John 13.

2,000 years ago, Jesus had followers and they had no idea what was about to happen. As He entered into that week before the events, His disciples were clueless. And so Jesus took a meal to prepare them for what was to come. And I thought we might take a closer look at that time together, that conversation with Him and his disciples in the Upper Room, right after that event of Palm Sunday, to prepare for the events unfolding. This is a message that we will call *Follow the Leader*.

***1*** *Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.* ***2*** *During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,* ***3*** *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,* ***4*** *rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.* ***5*** *Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.* ***6*** *He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?”* ***7*** *Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.”* ***8*** *Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”* ***9*** *Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”* ***10*** *Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.”* ***11*** *For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.”*

***12*** *When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you?* ***13*** *You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.* ***14*** *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.* ***15*** *For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.* ***16*** *Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.* ***17*** *If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.* ***18*** *I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’* ***19*** *I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.* ***20*** *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”*

***21*** *After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”* ***22*** *The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke.* ***23*** *One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side,* ***24*** *so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.* ***25*** *So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?”* ***26*** *Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.* ***27*** *Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.”* ***28*** *Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him.* ***29*** *Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor.* ***30*** *So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.*

***31*** *When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* ***32*** *If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.* ***33*** *Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’* ***34*** *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* ***35*** *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

***36*** *Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.”* ***37*** *Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”* ***38*** *Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.*

In 2013, a few men attempted to rank the 100 Most Significant figures in history. The ranking was not one of moral approval. It was just a recognition of lasting significance, of impact. They used advanced technology to try to aggregate millions of traces. And they formed a single consensus value about individuals in a way similar to how Google ranks web pages. And the list is full of names that you might expect. Socrates, Gautama Buddha, Winston Churchill. But at the top ten, here they are in order from least to greatest.

10. Thomas Jefferson

9. Alexander the Great

8. Aristotle

7. Adolf Hitler

6. George Washington

5. Abraham Lincoln

4. William Shakespeare

3. Mohammad

2. Napoleon

And who do you suppose number one to be? Not surprisingly, the data ranked the number one most significant person in history as Jesus Christ. He stands at the very center of history and the very center of the Scriptures. His significance cannot be overstated. But He’s not merely one of the most significant figures, but also one of the most controversial. In another website, Wikipedia, when they celebrated their 15th anniversary, they released information about the top most edited controversial pages. And in the top 3, no surprise, was Jesus. He is a most unique figure.

Jerusalem was in an uproar at this point. Rumors had been spreading for years about this rural man from Galilee. He was healing people and speaking strange teachings. But now all of a sudden, He’s come near to Jerusalem and actually raised someone from the dead; someone that people knew. Lazarus! This was an outrageous claim, but the witnesses were too many to stifle. The religious leaders were unsettled. Something about this was special and unique, and it was controversial. If you look back in John chapter 11, it helps us gather what is happening.

Jews who had come with Mary had seen what He had done with Lazarus and they believed in Him in John 11:45. But some of the other Jews went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. And they gathered together with the leaders and counselors saying, “What are we going to do? This man performs many signs.” In verse 47, “If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” So in verse 53, “from that day on, they made plans to put him to death.” Intrigue!

Now in verse 55, we learn it’s the Passover of the Jews, where many are coming to Jerusalem to be purified. And they were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? Do you think He’s going to come here?” In verse 57, the chief priests and the Pharisees gave orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, because they would arrest him.

Well, John 12, verse 1. Six days before the Passover, Jesus comes to Bethany. Lazarus and Martha and Mary are there. And they have a dinner. Martha serves. Lazarus is with them at the table. Mary anoints Jesus’ feet and Judas is upset because he kept care of the money. He said, “This is a waste of money with this perfume.” It’s a significant moment for him.

Well, a large crowd of Jews had learned Jesus was there and they came because they wanted to see Him and Lazarus who supposedly came back from the dead. And the chief priests said, “We have to kill this Lazarus guy, too,” verse 10. A lot of people were coming away and believing in Jesus. In John 12:17, the crowd who had been there kept telling people about this resurrection. And the reason why this other crowd had built in Jerusalem as Jesus entered is they wanted to see Him. “Who is this one?” And they entered in. And the Pharisees looked and they said, “Look, you’re gaining nothing. The world has gone after him.”

Not only that, but as Jesus is there, some Greeks show up, non-Jews, Gentiles. And they come to Philip and they say, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” And all of a sudden, Jesus recognizes something significant is happening. He says, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” And in that conversation, He speaks of death in verse 27. He says, “My soul is troubled. What shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ For this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice from heaven. “I have glorified and I will glorify again.” This is part of the plan of God. And everyone says, “Whoa! Was that thunder? What’s going on?” And Jesus it said in verse 33, He’s speaking about the kind of death He’s going to die. What a flurry of activity. Controversial. Resurrection. Insurrection. Intrigue. Murder plots. A voice from heaven. This is no usual man. There’s no one like Him.

And not much has changed. Few words can spark more emotion and controversy than the name of Jesus. It is by His name, in His name, that millions pray, and with His name that millions others curse. In some parts of the world, the mere mention of His name can bring swift persecution. And in many areas of our own culture, His name invites scorn and ridicule. But what’s shocking about Jesus is that His message was so simple. He boils down the entire Old Testament law to this command of love. I mean, when He gave the disciples a new command, it was love. It would seem strange that a man so simple, who taught about love, to be so controversial. Why is that so? It’s because Jesus’ love is scandalous. Jesus’ love is not like our love. It’s scandalous! There’s nothing like it. It’s unique. It’s so unlike what we expect. It causes public outrage. And in John 13 we see the full scandal of His love begin to unfold before the disciples’ eyes. In the midst of this controversy, in this Upper Room, we see His heart revealed.

So what is it that makes His love so unique, so controversial, so different, so shocking? Why is His love considered so scandalous? And what does it mean for those who follow Him? The answer is in this chapter. We’ll unpack it with five reasons why. Five reasons that prove His love is scandalous; that showcase the qualities that set Him apart. Why He is so unique.

**Reason #1: His love is sacrificial (13:1-11)**

You can see this in verses 1-11. Perhaps we can summarize it with the words “He loved them to the end and began to wash the disciples feet.” It’s a scandalous concept, sacrificial love. Sacrifice means give up; offer something at one’s own cost. At its core, Jesus’ love is about giving. Where the world so often defines love as getting, Jesus is defining love as giving. The world would say, “You make me feel like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” Or, “You complete me.” Or, “How could I live without you?” But Jesus teaches the concept of love is not a concept of selfishness, but sacrifice. To the human nature, that concept is scandalous. A God who would come, who deserved so much more, and yet would stoop to wash feet? Jesus exemplified the humility of sacrificial love. We call verses 1-11, “How low can you go?” And we see how Jesus shows us this love. It’s a love that He was destined to show, a love He displays and a love He defends. You can see it’s His destiny in verse 1. It came about by the Father for a particular time, and the time is now reached.

***1*** *Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

He was fulfilling His destiny. It’s a destiny to love a world that John 1:10 says was made for him and yet did not know Him. Now even though this was a world that rejected God, John 3:16, we know “God loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that whoever would believe in Him would not perish but have eternal life.” He came for a reason. This was His mission, His destiny. It was to die a sacrificial death for an undeserving world. This mission is scandalous, and it’s sacrificial love at its finest. The perfect, spotless Lamb of God came to die for wretched, evil, wicked, dirty sinners like us. That was His destiny determined by the Father before time began. It’s a love that is scandalous. And He fulfilled that destiny and He puts it on display through this sacrificial humility. Here’s the context in which He displays His love.

***2*** *During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,*

Even in that context, Jesus shows love. Not only that, but He shows it despite His authority.

***3*** *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,*

He had authority, and yet He uses that authority not to crush His betrayer, but to lay His life down. And He’s going to demonstrate it in the most shocking, shameful way.

***4*** *rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.* ***5*** *Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

This is shameful! Embarrassing! Their feet were not just dirty with dust. Back then they traveled by animals and they didn’t have great sewage systems. This was a very dirty job. It was embarrassing. And here, He washes their feet. This is not the way of a worldly leader, of worldly love. Even when He knew that there was a traitor among them, He washed the feet. This is sacrificial love.

***6*** *He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?”* ***7*** *Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.”* ***8*** *Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.”*

Simon Peter rejects it, and Jesus has to speak sense into him. He doesn’t understand the profound action of sacrificial love that’s manifested to him right now. This is a metaphor for the cleansing that is about to happen in a few hours. And it also is a model for His disciples to follow in the future. This all goes past Peter.

*Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”*

This must happen! This is a metaphor and a model that you need to be aware of. It’s great love! Peter was uncomfortable at the feet washing, but he didn’t understand half of the scandal that was about to ensue. This is the beginning of Jesus’ true sacrificial love. Peter’s audacity and reluctance to have his feet washed, and then he switches toward audacious extravagance in verse 9.

***9*** *Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”*

He’s missing the point. Jesus has to defend this sacrificial love from Peter’s audacity, but also from Judas’ treachery.

***10*** *Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.”*

He knew He had a betrayer from the beginning. In John 6:64, “Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.” And yet, He washes his feet. Sacrificial love is scandalous! Jesus is unique. And this teaches us about love. True love is costly. It’s not earned, but given. The kind of love that God shows is a far cry from the shallow romantic feelings that we see displayed all around us through crushes or simple, initial, seeming feelings. This is the deep commitment of covenant love only known by those who know how much it costs.

I was recently reminded of an example of this kind of love that might be worth reflecting on. A man, Robertson McQuilken, he passed away, and he was the president of Columbia International University. During his time there, there was lots of development and affective things, but I was drawn…let me read a little bit from this article. He died and “his accomplishments as a university president didn’t make the first line of his obituary. Instead, most of his remembrances began with his love for his wife Muriel... She served faithfully by her husband’s side for half a century as his career moved him around the country and around the world, including 12 years in Japan as a missionary. But in the 1980s, something strange started happening to Muriel. Her personality changed. Her creative spirit dimmed. She would become fearful, even angry. It did not take long for doctors to discover that a disease had descended on her: Alzheimer’s.

For a while, Robertson McQuilkin continued as president of Columbia International University. But as Alzheimer’s disease continued its terrible work in Muriel’s body, he found that only he could care for her. “Muriel seems to be almost happy when with

me,” McQuilkin said then. “And almost never happy when not with me. She seems to

feel trapped, becomes very fearful, sometimes almost terror. And when she can’t get to

me, there can be anger. She’s in distress.”

For Robertson McQuilkin, the solution became obvious: He would resign as the

president of Columbia International University to care full-time for his wife Muriel.

When he announced his resignation, he said, “I promised . . . in sickness and in health till death do us part. And I’m a man of my word.” McQuilkin went on to say, “This was no grim duty to which I stoically resigned, however. It was only fair. She had, after all, cared for me for almost four decades with marvelous devotion; now it was my turn. And such a partner she was! If I took care of her for 40 years, I would never be out of her debt.” He emphasized that caring for Muriel was not something that he “had” to do. “It’s not that I *have* to. It’s that I *get* to.””

The kind of cost and the beauty of true love that is protected by covenant, commitment. “In sickness and in health.” That’s the kind of love that our world needs to see, that our families need to see. And we would long for that. Some of us have failed in that and some of us think “I might never have that.” And here’s the hope. That kind of love is just a hint, a picture of the actual true covenant sacrificial love offered by Jesus that’s available as a free gift to those who would believe. This is the kind of love that God offers. It’s the scandalous love of one, the Son of Man, who came not to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45) He didn’t deserve to die. He was perfect, and yet He offers His life for sinners so that they can be saved. What a cost! What a love!

As we think about our response to that kind of love, Jesus enables us to get moved by His sacrificial humility. And a question for us to consider is: What actions will we take to wash ourselves anew in Jesus’ wondrous love? What thoughts will we consider? What friendships will we pursue? What songs will we sing? What would it take to wash ourselves in love so scandalous it could reach down and save a sinner like us? Get moved by this scandalous love! Jesus is unique because His love is sacrificial and because

**Reason #2: His love is commanded. (13:12-20)**

You see this in verses 12-20, summarized here. “You also ought to wash one another’s feet.” Here is the scandalous commission. Jesus’ love is commanded. He says to His followers, “You also walk in humble servanthood.” Follow! And that’s scandalous to this world. That kind of love, the humility that He exemplified, now He calls us to follow and embody. You could call this “Follow the Leader.” Here, Jesus expects His followers to follow in His example. This kind of love is going to be disrespected by His betrayer, and it’s also going to be accepted by future believers. It’s expected in verses 12-17.

***12*** *When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you?* ***13*** *You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.* ***14*** *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.* ***15*** *For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.* ***16*** *Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.* ***17*** *If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*

He is expecting this from His followers. In verse 18, he also recognizes this is going to be disrespected by His enemy.

***18*** *I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’*

He understands that Judas, from the beginning, was going to betray Him. One who He dined with in intimacy and trust was going to betray Him. But it was all a part of God’s plan. And He wants the disciples to know His awareness now and remember it after the fact, so that they would believe.

***19*** *I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.*

They need to know that Jesus is the one. He is the “I AM.” He is not just the Messiah in a way that they had not understood until now, but He is God, Yahweh, and they would believe.

***20*** *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”*

The disciples are tied with this unbreakable chain to Jesus, who is inseparably tied to God the Father. His mission of being sent is going to continue on through them. They will be sent as He was, to live on mission. The point of this section is not only that true love is costly, but true love gets messy.

For several years now, there’s been a popular reality tv series where CEO’s or company executives go undercover in their organizations. I haven’t watched this show, but I don’t think I need to, to understand the premise. They come down and try to disguise themselves as an entry-level employee. And people like it because these executives end up discovering that the job might be a little harder than they expected, and they get surprised. Often, the employees end up growing in their loyalty to their boss. They are inspired because of their willingness to get their hands dirty. And the show is well-liked because on one occasion, an executive came and he tried to be a forklift driver and ended up getting fired by one of his own employees for being unsafe. The show reveals what one source says, “a worker teaching the boss something about being a CEO, but the CEO never has anything to teach the workers about being workers.”

We as people can easily get distracted from who we’re leading and what we’re asking them to do, can’t we? Is Jesus like that? Is He far-removed and distant? No. He went so far undercover. He got his hands dirtier than we ever could. He shows that He understands and endures the suffering and pain deeper than we could imagine. That’s the kind of leader that He is. He’s a leader with love that gets messy. And it’s that kind of leader that inspires loyalty for us to get messy. He enables us to do that in our lives. Loving people is messy, very messy! It hurts! And so much so that sometimes you think, “I’m done with this mess. I’m ready to go somewhere else.” But Jesus calls us and enables us to get messy. Just think: what kind of opportunities for clothing ourselves with this sort of humble love are we currently being presented with? What kind of relationships are costly and messy? And what relationships have we avoided, that are difficult? And as God convicts us and reveals ways to enter into that, we confess it and turn and enter into the mess like our Savior did. Thank God that Jesus is not like us. Thank God that He did not leave us in our mess. And may He transform us to work in that way. Jesus’ love is scandalous! There’s nothing like it. It’s commanded.

**Reason # 3: His love will be challenged (13:21-30)**

You can summarize it here. He was troubled and He said, “One of you will betray me.” Here’s the concession that Jesus allows, that is scandalous. He allows His love to be challenged. He allows pain to enter in. He allows that this unmatched beauty of His love is not going to enjoy peaceful, smooth sailing. There’s opposition. It’s an opposition that He allows, He permits. Jesus’ love will suffer challenges, but these trials even to the point of treachery in our lives, they cannot stop God’s plan. In fact, it is the very challenges that He will use as the means to secure His plan. Even though there’s an enemy in the midst, Jesus proves challenges don’t stop God’s plan. They secure it. We see the challenges clarified by Jesus in verse 21.

***21*** *After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”*

He couldn’t say it more plainly. One of you in the Twelve is a traitor, and he is being called out. The moment is tense. He clarifies it.

***22*** *The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke.*

What’s happening?!

***23*** *One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side,*

And now the challenger is specified because Simon Peter motions to him. This is most likely the Apostle John leaning.

***24*** *so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.* ***25*** *So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?”* ***26*** *Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.*

And even in this act of direct exposure, Jesus points him out, yet he still escapes disguised.

***27*** *Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.”* ***28*** *Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him.*

Think about that for a moment. Jesus and Satan are in the same room, and no one has any clue! Our ability to discern what’s happening spiritually is not dependable. We need to be careful about trusting ourselves and our assessment of what’s happening. They thought he was going to do a task for Jesus. They had no idea what was happening and the enemy that was there and the pain that was being caused in that betrayal. But you know who did know? Jesus knew. He knew that pain in that moment. And it’s almost as if when they entered that room it was day, but then when Judas rushes out the door, the stark black of night beyond weighed heavily, not just physically, but spiritually. It was the hour of darkness.

***29*** *Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor.* ***30*** *So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.*

True love hurts! There’s no way around that. It’s not free of pain. Even if you have the power to heal, even if you are the Son of God, true love, according to God’s plan, is willing to endure cost, to get messy, and even to be hurt.

There’s a film I remember from my childhood that my family would watch when we got sick and we’d stay home. It’s about a grandfather who comes to visit his grandson. He reads a book to him about a bride who becomes a princess. And this young woman is in love with the hero of the story who ends up being kidnapped. And in his absence, this evil prince tries to marry her. And the hero is trying to get back to rescue his true love, but he’s too late. The grandfather reads that the evil prince marries this girl. And at that point, the grandson cuts in. He says, “Hold it! Hold it, grandpa. You read that wrong. She doesn’t marry him. She marries the hero. I’m sure of it. I mean, after all the hero did for her, if she didn’t marry him, it wouldn’t be fair.” The grandpa says, “Well, who says life is fair? Where is that written? Life isn’t always fair.” The kid says, “I’m telling you, you’re messing up the story. Now get it right!”

Don’t we feel like that with God sometimes? I mean, I’m sure that’s how the disciples felt. Peter said so to Jesus in the past. That’s how we feel when we’re reading the Bible sometimes. And it’s certainly how we feel when we face things in our lives, challenges. “God, You’re messing up the story. This isn’t what is supposed to happen. This hurts!” But we’ve missed the fact that true love does hurt. God allows it to face challenges. And that’s a scandalous thought. But right in the middle of it, there’s Jesus. And because of Him, we can get ready for what life brings and challenges with a courageous sobriety. We can get ready and we can ask ourselves: What challenges, whether it be relational, or financial, or logistical, or spiritual...what kind of challenges are we currently facing that tempt us to believe that God’s plan is being stopped instead of secured? What challenges make us afraid and worried and anxious, thinking, “God’s out of control now. My life’s getting messed up. The story is getting messed up.” What sort of challenges tempt us to believe that? The scandalous love of Jesus enters in. There’s nothing like it. And He says, “This is a part of love.” It’s all according to God’s plan. That’s a scandalous message.

**Reason #4: His love is clear (13:31-35)**

In verses 31-35 you can summarize it with these words: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” This is the scandalous confirmation that Jesus prescribes. His love will be clear, unmistakable. It has a distinguishing smell, a distinct look, a unique feel. He says people will know His followers because they share His love among themselves. It is this mutual love that marks true followers of Jesus. We’ll call this section “Unmistakable Family Love.” It’s the clarity of this love demonstrated between God the Father and God the Son. In one sense, it’s delayed while the Son is on the cross. And then it will be displayed between all of His followers. So look at the family love demonstrated between God the Father and God the Son.

***31*** *When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* ***32*** *If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.*

It’s like the switch has been flipped. The fuse has been lit. And God’s marvelous plan to glorify Himself, we see it unfolding and this family love demonstrated between God the Father and God the Son. It’s a mutual love and glory no matter what it is about to endure. It’s the same sort of phrase that is used in John 12:23. When the Greeks came, Jesus said,

**John 12:23** And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

**John 12:27-28** “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

They are in step, in sync. Family love. This is all the plan. We’re in step and working. That kind of close, perfect, united family love. It is this wondrous family love that was before time and that Jesus prays in John 17 that we would be invited and welcomed into, adopted into. That family glorious love. In the love that is enjoyed in the Godhead. And the disciples are hearing this, but the fulfillment of this love is going to be delayed for a time. Jesus says

***33*** *Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’*

There is something about to happen that’s going to cause you to be unsettled. This family love which is beautifully demonstrated will be temporarily delayed. But it’s one day going to be evidently displayed by all who follow God.

***34*** *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* ***35*** *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

This is what will mark you; this mutual family love. The aroma of Trinitarian love will waft from their relationships. It’s a love that is unmistakable and clear. Here’s the point. True love shows. God’s true love shows. It’s costly, yes. It’s messy, yes. It hurts, yes. But it shows.

My wife and I moved to Illinois about 5 years ago, and we’ve done our best to blend in. We do our best, but every once in a while, we remember that we’re not from here. Like this morning, when I was trying to get my way through the snow. But there’s certain things that we do that betray the fact that we’re not from here. Early on when we came we would ask people, “Are you from around here?” And they would say things like, “No, I’m not.” Oh, okay. Where are you from? They’d say, “I’m from Washington.” Whoa! Okay. When did you move here? “No, actually, the Washington that is just a little bit of ways away.” Okay, gotcha! So you’re kind of from around here. We’re getting used to it. And then we’d ask somebody else, where are you from? “From Wisconsin.” Oh, cool! When did you move to Illinois? “Actually, Wisconsin, Illinois.” Oh, Gotcha! We’re not from around here. Where are you from? “Peru.” Oh, Peru! Wow! Very interesting! (Laughter!) Where are you from? “Chilli.” Chile? (Laughter!) We looked silly! And everyone knows *you’re* not from around here, are you? They can tell.

What’s the distinguishing mark of a Christian? It’s not lots of money. It’s not a certain ethnicity. It’s not a symbolic cross necklace or bracelet or t-shirt that we wear. It is a love that we embody. And people can see it. It’s the love of God. They know that smell. It’s the aroma of Christ. And because of Him, we can get going. We can get busy with that kind of love. It’s affectionate tenacity amongst ourselves. Think, what is this love costing us? How are we getting messy? How are we getting going, getting busy? What lifestyle choices, what rhythms of love can we implement to distinguish ourselves and our community as disciples of Jesus? It’s going to cost. It’s going to hurt. It’s going to get messy. But how do we get going with this kind of tenacity that Jesus has for us? How do we affect the rhythms of our life? This is the kind of scandalous love that Jesus has. There’s nothing like it.

**Reason #5: His love is uncommon (13:36-38)**

You can see this in verses 36-38. When Peter says he’s going to lay his life down, Jesus says, “Will you lay down your life for me?” It’s a scandalous correction that Jesus gives. His love is uncommon. It’s not every day human commitment or resolve. His love is unbreakable. It’s not fickle like ours. It doesn’t waver like ours. It is firm and true no matter the cost. And Peter touts his love and resolve, but Jesus sets him straight. His love is not equal in durability. And we’ll see this correction against Peter’s powerful resolve. It would have seemed scandalous to us at the time, but now we can understand it. Jesus exemplifies this love. He calls His disciples to follow Him in the same manner. He acknowledges it will suffer threats and challenges. And He guarantees that it will mark His followers. But there’s a final warning. He says you can’t do it on your own. This love cannot be manufactured in human strength, in human resolve. It’s not sufficient to impress God or to overcome the spiritual challenges we will face. His love is not common to man. It is uncommon. It is supernatural. We need Him. His love comes from above. So in verses 36-38, you can call this “Best of Intentions.” The fickleness of human resolve is exposed.

***36*** *Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.”* ***37*** *Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”* ***38*** *Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.*

He’s reversing that question that he’d asked before with washing the feet. Jesus says, “You are going to deny Me and betray Me.” These are heavy words. Peter’s confident resolve will not be enough. Our hearts are too fickle, too unstable. I mean, this is the good guy—Peter. And one writer says, “Good intentions in a secure room after good food are far less attractive in a darkened garden with a hostile mob. At this point in his pilgrimage, Peter’s intentions and self-assessment vastly outstrip his strength.” He boasts and he even says he’s willing to die. And in a sense, he is. In a few hours, he’s going to prove that he’s willing to kill for Jesus. But in the darkest moment, at Jesus’ greatest hour of need, Peter will abandon Him in denial. Because Peter has no idea what is around the corner. And none of us are in a different state. We have no idea what lays around the corner. True love comes from above. It’s not common to man. We need it from God. It’s divine. We can’t get it within ourselves. This kind of love is costly. It gets messy. It hurts. It shows. And it only comes from above.

A few years ago, my wife was helping with a pre-Kindergarten class. And these classes had annual presentations. All the kids would march up. We didn’t have kids at the time, but I went there to support her. And I kind of enjoyed watching parents bust out the video cameras and watch their kids. And at one point, the kids sang this song and concluded with this memory verse. They all said in unison, “We will do everything the Lord has said. We will obey!” And all the parents laughed. (Laughter!)

This is a situation where you realize they don’t have the strength to follow through on that. But because of Jesus and what He says here to Peter, we understand that the best of us, we can get real with a solemn modesty. Get real and realize that the only kind of love we can have is one that comes from above. And so, ask yourself: What kind of tactics are you currently tempted to rely on? What kind of things do you think that in some way you can use to manipulate God or outcomes by your own resolve, your own innovation, your own effort. “I know I can control this. I know I can do this if I just try harder.” True love comes from above. It is not common to man. It’s supernatural. It’s only from Jesus. And that’s a scandalous message. There is nothing like Jesus.

It was a few years ago that we had our annual VBS here at Bethany. There were hundreds of children running around and getting into trouble, but also having a blast. We love it! I was in charge of games. And one thing that you don’t want to see when you’re running games is rain. Because you have hundreds of kids outside, and it’s okay. But when you try to come into the gym with 75 second graders right after snack time and rice crispy treats, it’s a little bit of a pandemonium. Well on those rain days, we had 30 pre-schoolers. I divided them into groups. One group played “Duck, Duck, Goose.” The other group played “Follow the Leader.” You know “Follow the Leader.” Somebody is in charge and everyone else tries to copy. And so these little kids are copying this high schooler. He started to clap his hands. He started to stomp his feet. He turned around. And then he quickly ran out of ideas on how to entertain these kids. And he started doing some kind of dance that was way beyond their level of ability. It was way beyond my level of ability. I don’t even know what it was. And he was dancing, and the kids stopped following. And then they looked at me with these faces that were so perplexed. And one kid just said, “This doesn’t make any sense!” (Laughter!) That was a smart kid.

When we understand Jesus’ love for real, when we look at it, we say, “I can’t do that and this doesn’t make any sense. What kind of love is this? You’re asking me to follow that?” And from a worldly standpoint, it would seem foolish. He says to Peter, “Listen, you can’t follow Me now, but you will follow Me later. You’re going to be afraid and deny me now, but later, you will die for Me. You will follow.” That kind of leadership, follow to the death? That doesn’t make any sense. That’s scandalous! But that’s the path of love. That’s where Jesus leads. He has died for you and He will enable you to enjoy the glory that lays ahead. He’s a scandalous leader. No figure is more influential. No individual is more controversial. And no leader is more scandalous. The question is: Will we follow?