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Series: The Gospel of John
Message: The Eleventh Commandment

Transcribed Message
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John 13:31-35

It was the late Francis Schaeffer, who I have said on more than a few occasions was like a modern-day prophet in his generation, in his time, and not a prophet in the sense of bringing new revelation from God, but certainly a prophet in the sense of discerning the time in which he lived and knowing how to bring that truth to bear on the situations that he spoke of and talked about. Probably nothing illustrates that better than his book that was published in the late 70s, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* It was a book that talked about the sanctity of life, and it talked about the upcoming culture of death that he really prophesied would happen. He said, if we diminish the value and the sanctity of life, then we are introducing ourselves to a culture of death. Well, that certainly happened, and we live in that culture today. We live very much in that culture today, so he was certainly correct about that.

Another little booklet that he wrote that maybe didn't get as much attention was entitled *The Mark of a Christian*. It was almost like he was doing an exposition of John 13 when he brings forward this truth that the true mark of a Christian is not to wear a shirt that says something about God or Jesus or Christ, as good as that is. It's not wearing a cross around your neck or a piece of jewelry of some kind that in some way announces perhaps something about your religious beliefs. It's not in having something on our bracelet, what would Jesus do? It isn't any of those things, he said. He said what it ultimately is is our love for each other as believers. That's the mark of a Christian. That's how it is that the world is supposed to look at us and say there's something different about those people. There's something about them that makes them distinctive and unique and different. All those other things, as good as they may be, are not the thing that God has put before us as to what is to make that difference.

Let's go to John 13, the verses we just read this morning. We look at verses 31 to 35, and what I want us to see in these verses is when we purposefully, intentionally, sacrificially love one another, we put on display this very thing that God has called us to. That is the mark of a Christian that is displayed in our love for each other. So we come back to this context. We've been talking in this 13th chapter about this introduction. Really, it's like a prelude. The 13th chapter is almost like a prelude to the Upper Room Discourse.

What we've seen, of course, at this point is this, first of all, the greatest demonstration of humility. How it is that Jesus, the Son of God, takes upon Himself the robe and the towel and the basin, and He washes the feet of the disciples. I mean, just incomprehensible. It's shocking on every level. They could hardly come to grips with what they witnessed that night. And so it was this amazing picture of Jesus going low and serving them in a most obvious way.

Then secondly, we saw the dismissal of the betrayer. In the dismissal of the betrayer, John talks about the physical darkness and talks about how Judas left the Upper Room and he went out and it was night. You just have to believe that there was a sense of oppression in that room that night. I mean, after all, we read just last week that Satan himself enters into Judas at that moment when the plan for Jesus' betrayal begins to unfold. When John says he goes out into the night, it's not, again, just a physical description of darkness, is it? It's the spiritual reality in this man's soul, and he can't be a part of what's going on in the Upper Room any longer. He has to leave. Jesus is about to introduce the disciples to the Lord's Supper, to communion, the introduction of the beauty of what will take place with the new covenant. And so, yes, Judas leaves and he goes into the night physically and spiritually.

Then we look this morning at the peak concern of Jesus, which is really this matter of our love for each other. John 13 is literally a prelude to chapter 14, 15, 16, and 17. Someone said that it is the key to understanding the rest of the discourse. If we get the principles of John 13 laid down, we'll have a much better opportunity to understand what Jesus is doing in 14 through 17. Jesus says, I'm leaving, you're staying, but it's going to be okay. That really is kind of the gist of it all.

Let's look at the mark of a Christian, and it begins with the certainty of victory. The certainty of victory in verses 31 and 32. Note again when we read: When he had gone out, (obviously Judas) Jesus said, now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. Let me just stop and say this. The whole idea of Son of Man is this phrase that we've talked about on a couple of occasions from the Gospel of John. It's drawn out of the Old Testament. The Old Testament usage of the Son of Man, of course, is a word of glory. It's a word of majesty. It's speaking about the coming one in Daniel 7 in particular, right? So you have the Son of Man as a title from the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, when especially John uses this phrase frequently, it's tied to suffering. Suffering. You have this juxtaposition of the Old Testament glory, majesty, the coming one, and then John steps into the whole motif of the Son of Man. Jesus himself, remember, is the only one who ever refers to him that way. And here it is going to be a picture of suffering.

So, verse 32, if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself. That is the Father. I think that's what that's referencing. And glorify him at once. So now before we look at the outline, those two verses that I've just read are verses that are speaking proleptically, all right? Proleptically. To speak proleptically is to talk about something that's in the future as if it's already happened. There's this absolute sense of certainty. So, if I were to say to you, our beloved Nebraska Cornhuskers are going to most certainly be in the CFP playoff, right? That would be proleptically. It'd be a few other things too, but it would be proleptically, right? You speak about something that hasn't happened, and you do so with this absolute sense of certainty. Paul does it in Romans 8, right? When he says that we have been glorified, well, we're here on the earth. But in the eyes of God, in the theology of Paul, it's as if it's already happened. It's to speak proleptically. So that's what Jesus is doing here.

What is in view when he speaks that way? Well, it is how Jesus sees the cross. And how does he see the cross? He sees the cross as a place of triumph, and he sees the cross as a place of glory. Just step back for a moment and think about what we've seen in this chapter already. The Son of God, the contrast of the cross and glory, suffering and glory

How did those ever go together? In John's gospel, we see already Jesus, the Son of God, washing the feet of the disciples. These contrasts that John gives us just in this passage, in this context. We see the betrayer sitting at the table, eating and fellowshiping with the one he's going to betray. We see Judas going out into the night, and the contrast between Jesus as being the light. And so all the way through, the cross and glory. It just simply doesn't make sense to us, but that's what the point is here.

We aren't, in a sense, surprised that Jesus would do that. Because he's been talking about the hour all through John's gospel, right? But it's always been to this point, my hour has not yet come. But now as we've noted, the hour has come. As Jesus looks at that hour, he realizes and he recognizes it defines his whole mission. It defines his whole purpose for coming. It captures the very essence of the incarnation. Very God of God becoming man. For what purpose? So that he could, of course, go to the cross. It's John 3:16, isn't it? For God so loved the world that he gave, he sent his Son. And that's what Jesus is speaking here.

So, you have this contrast, but you have this incredible irony. The cross and glorification. Just look how many times that he uses the word "glorify". Five times in these two verses. The cross is glorification from the human viewpoint. The cross is a symbol, rightly understood, of utter humiliation, utter degradation. It is a picture of the absolute inhumanity of man to man. I mean, everything that happened to Jesus that we know that was a part of his passion experience. Not just the arrest and not just the phony trials, but the beating, the mockery, the spitting in his face, the pulling of his beard, the nailing of him to the cross naked. All of that, utter humiliation. And yet here we're told the Creator God, who John begins his gospel by saying, in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. Everything that was made, John says, was made by him. He made the very tree that he was nailed through. Yet here he is now pointing to that impending cross, which he speaks of with absolute certainty. And he uses the word "glory" five times to talk about it.

A word of triumph. It's simply the word *doxa*. It's used 400 times in the Old Testament to speak of majesty and praise. We get our word doxology from it, right? Praise

God from whom all blessings flow. That's what Jesus is pointing us to. There are at least three things that we can point to as Jesus looks of the cross this way. Just note these things.

First of all, it is this glory. It is this doxology because it's the focal point of this great drama of redemption. That's what this is all about, isn't it? This is the storyline of the Bible that's coming to fruition. This is the story that goes from Genesis to Revelation, laying out for us the redemptive purposes of God. It brings us to literally the climax of human history in the death and resurrection of Jesus. So, that's why Jesus can look at this event and say with so much certainty as if it had happened that this is what I am going to glory in.

Secondly, it's the reversal of Adam's sin. It's the reversal of Adam's sin. The first Adam failed. God created Adam and Eve, placed them in perfection. There was nothing about their environment, nothing about them. Everything that you could ever want was there. They had, but they failed. They disobeyed God. They chose to sin. Paul picks up on that in Romans 5, and he speaks about where the first Adam failed, the second Adam, Christ, the final Adam, the last Adam, he came and he succeeded. That's what this is pointing to.

Then it's the defeat of Satan. It's the defeat of Satan. The writer of Hebrews gives us that statement himself when he says in the second chapter in verse 14, Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things. That's the incarnation, right? That through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver those through fear of death who were subject to lifelong slavery. So, it is the reversal.

We go to Hebrews 12, that incredible statement, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy, the writer of Hebrews says, but it's the glory in that sense that Jesus is speaking of here as well. And so, it is all of those things, the focal point of redemptive history, the reversal of Adam's sin, it's the defeat of Satan. All of that is kind of looking from the vantage point of Christ. He looks at the cross, and He says, this is the place of triumph, and this is the place of glory.

Now, we switch a little bit, and then it's the Father's turn, this reciprocity. How would you define the relationship between the Father and the Son? One of the beautiful words that captures the essence of the relationship between the Father and the Son is the word "glory". The Father wants to glorify the Son, the Son wants to glorify the Father, and that's what's unfolding for us here. The Father and the glory of the cross. So, to Jesus, it looks like a place of triumph and a place of glory. To the Father, it's also the glory of the cross.

How is it that the Father is glorified? He says, if God is glorified in Him. He doesn't say if God is glorified by Him. That would be true. Of course it would be true. He is glorified by Him, but He says He's glorified in Him, because to be glorified in Him, Jesus embodies the very glory of God Himself. That's what John said in the first chapter in verse 14, when he said, we beheld His what? His glory as of the only begotten of the Father. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. That's how John started off his prologue in the first chapter. The cross, in other words, is the manifestation of the very attributes of God. That's what He is saying to us here.

And what would those attributes be? Well, we won't mention all of them, but it certainly is a picture of His justice and His holiness, isn't it? His justice and His holiness. Paul speaks of that in Romans chapter 3 and verse 26. And there he says, it was to show His righteousness at the present time so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

People sometimes say, I don't understand why Jesus had to die on the cross. Why couldn't God just wipe out everybody's sin? Why couldn't He just make it all go away? Well, He couldn't because the very justice and righteousness and holiness of God had to be dealt with. And it would have been a gross violation of His righteousness, justice, and holiness just to say, okay, everybody's sin is gone. No, the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, the justice of God required that that righteousness which God requires be, in fact, taken care of. It's a picture of His faithfulness.

It takes us all the way back to Genesis 3, doesn't it? Genesis 3:15, the very first preaching of the gospel. The promise to Adam and Eve after they fall into sin is that there's going to come through the seed of the woman, one who is going to bring redemption. So, the cross magnifies the justice of God, the holiness of God. It magnifies the faithfulness of God. God's faithful. He's a promise keeper. It is a picture of His sovereign purposes. We mentioned this before, but in Acts chapter 2, this Jesus has been delivered up, right? It's been delivered up according to the definite purposes of God, according to the predetermined, the predestined purposes of God, according to the sovereign purposes of God. So, it is a part of the outworking of God's sovereign purposes. And then, of course, it is a picture of God's great love. The cross stands forever as a picture of God's great love. But God, Romans 5:8, demonstrated, He showed us the love of God, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. This is all a part of the certainty of victory that Jesus is talking about. This is a part of the glory that the Father looks at when He sees what Jesus is going to accomplish on the cross.

Now, flowing out of that truth of how it is that the Father and the Son look at the cross. What looks like the greatest defeat in human history is actually the greatest victory in human history. And flowing out of that, there is this call to love. So, that basis is laid, and the call to love is in verses 33 through 35.

Jesus' heart for His disciples, first of all in verse 33, look at that. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek Me, and just as I said to the Jews, that's just John's terminology for the religious leaders, so now I say to you, where I am going, you cannot come. That expression at the beginning of verse 33, little children. It's the only place in all the Gospels it's used. Matthew never talks about little children. Mark never talks about little children. Luke never talks about little children. John uses this expression one time in the Gospel, and he uses it right here. It is a word of family. It's a word of intimacy. It's a word of affection. These are some of the rough and tumble guys of their time, right? There are a lot of guys sitting in that room that are blue-collar workers, and they're looking at each other, and they're thinking, is He talking to me? Little children. This affectionate word that a father would speak to a child, a small child. Jesus speaks to them in this way.

It brings to mind for me just a picture, guys, that God has given where He has entrusted to you men, you dads, to step into this role where you speak spiritual truth to your little children, young or old or in between. Don't yield that privilege, that responsibility to anybody. Don't think the church is going to do that for you. We'll do that with you. But God has called you to do that. God has called you. He's given you the opportunity to sit down with your children and teach them the Word of God and the truth of God and model for them what that looks like. That's what Jesus is doing here.

John is so impressed. This made such an impact on him that he's sitting there that night with these 11 other guys, these 10 other guys at that point, and Jesus begins this discussion, and He calls them little children. And then what happens? When John gets to his first epistle, 1 John, seven different times He talks about little children. He catches what Jesus has on his heart, his concern, and Jesus says, you have a little while. Yeah, just a little while. I mean, we're talking 24 hours Jesus's lifeless body will be in the tomb. Hours away, all of this is coming. You're going to seek me, but you're not going to find me. We know that's what happened, right? I think even of those two guys walking on the Emmaus Road, so discouraged, so disappointed, thinking that the whole thing just fell apart And Jesus speaks to that. He said, you're going to be looking for me. You're going to be down. You're going to be discouraged, but it's going to all be okay.

And then before anybody can say anything, Jesus issues this command in verse 34 and 35. 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. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Now, what stands out about that? Well, when you read, first of all, that verse 34, the very first thing that stands out, it's a new commandment. A new commandment.

So, we have to ask ourselves the question: how is this a new commandment? These guys obviously are studying the Old Testament Scriptures and they're pursuing a relationship with God. They're sitting at the feet of Jesus. Is this the first time they've ever heard anything like this? I'm telling you a new commandment that you love one another. In what sense we have to understand is this new? And so, the first thing we want to say is it's

not new in content. It's not new in content. Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 18, way back in the Old Testament, under the Old Covenant, God had said love your neighbor as yourself. So, they'd heard that before. When Jesus was asked, what's the greatest commandment? Remember he said, well, you've got to love God first, but the second is like unto it, you have to love your neighbor as yourself. They've heard stuff like this before. They know that the Bible says that you're supposed to love other people. You're supposed to love your neighbor as you already love yourself. So, it can't be new in content.

I think what we are to understand here is it's new in terms of its clarity and it's new in terms of its scope. New in terms of clarity and scope. Just think of the context in which this is given. These guys have been arguing about who's the greatest, all right? Leading up to this point in the evening, they've been arguing about who among them is the greatest. They have failed miserably to take the towel in the basin and to wash each other's feet. They haven't done it. Within that same context, there's this prediction of someone among them who's going to betray their Lord. And then there is, of course, the impending departure of Jesus himself. He's taking them to a whole new level in this context and in this setting. And he's saying to them, you are going to need to love each other like never before. That's what he's saying. You are going to be facing circumstances and situations and the hostility of the world.

Just think what he's going to say. The world is going to hate you. He's going to get into that in the chapters to come, right? The world is going to hate you. You think the world hates you? You just go on any college campus in America today and try to say anything that even resembles truth, and you will just get shut down. They will not even have a conversation with you. They don't want to talk about another viewpoint. They will shout you down and shut you down. That's what Jesus is saying to these guys. You are stepping into a world that hates me, and it hates you, and you had better learn and understand that you have to love each other like never before.

Now, I want you to see the second thing is this is not optional. This is not optional, is it? Remember, we're in this evening. It's Maundy Thursday. Maundy Thursday. Maundy comes from the Latin word *mandatum*. *Mandatum* means command. So, this is like the

commandment of this Thursday is what? It is to love one another like you've never loved each other before. This is not a self-help technique. This is not some kind of self-esteem improvement project. This is not a suggestion. This is a command. This is something that Jesus is requiring of them. It's a present imperative. This is God's will for your life.

Thirdly, it's all about love for those in the body of Christ. That's what he's going to be previewing here. Love for one another in this setting of that upper room, of course, but beyond that to the beginnings of the church itself. He's saying that love relationship that you are to have for each other is to take priority. That's to be the priority. You realize that family love is a love that is temporal, isn't it? Love within the body of Christ is eternal. We will share eternity with each other forever. I don't know how anybody reads the Bible, especially the New Testament, and wants to read it with understanding and says, I don't need the church. I don't need to gather. I don't need to be with God's people. That is not only short-sighted, it is foolish. You can't possibly do the will of God for your life if you're not in community. That's what he's saying here. This love that you're to have for each other.

Now, at that point, they all breathed a big sigh of relief because they knew how easy they were to love each other, right? They just knew, oh, at first I thought this was going to be a hard assignment, but then I thought about the people in the room with me, and I thought, oh, I've got this. This is not going to be hard at all. No, of course not. We happen to know that some people are harder to love than others. Why are you guys all looking at me? Some people are harder to love than others, aren't they? There's no stipulation. There's no asterisk. There's no small print here. We are commanded to love each other, and you're not surprised when you understand that the word "love" here is the word *agape*, right? Unconditionally to love each other. This selfless love where we put the other person constantly before us. It's the love of 1 Corinthians 13.

Fourthly, it follows Jesus' example. That's what he's saying. This new commandment. They all loved him. Now they're to love each other like that. Notice again, he doesn't say, I love you. now you love me back. He says, I love you, now you love the way I love. You do that towards each other. The very same thing that happened with the foot

washing. Just as I have loved you. That's part of the newness. There's no higher example, is there, that we could ever possibly follow this standard?

But thankfully, thankfully we're given a new power. We step into the New Covenant. The Holy Spirit lives within us, and he enables us to love each other, even when it's hard. To love each other, even when we don't act very lovely. That's the whole point that Jesus would make here. One of the clearest indications that you're filled with the Holy Spirit, that you're controlled by the Holy Spirit, is what? The very first fruit of the Spirit is love. You can't possibly claim to be filled with the Spirit and controlled by the Spirit, and have a bad, stinky attitude towards a fellow believer in the body of Christ. Let alone in your own home, right? That's where it starts. It starts right in our own home. To love each other that way, to love each other as husband and wife, purposely, intentionally, sacrificially. That's what it looks like. To love our parents, to love our children, to love our friends, to love our neighbor. All of that comes into play here, doesn't it?

Then it's impactful and transformative. Impactful and transformative. By this, we'll all know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Notice the little word, if. Oh, wish he hadn't said that, right? If. So, it's a command, but it can be disobeyed. It's a command, but it isn't always followed, right? You can be a Christian and not be very loving. You can be a Christian and not be following this command that Jesus has given to us. It's harmful to yourself, and it harms the testimony of the body of Christ. But that's too often what the world has seen. Sadly, I think if you just went and did a man-on-the-street interview, a woman-on-the-street interview, and you asked them their perception of the church, how many of those people do you think would speak positively and say, oh, yeah, most of the churches that I've ever heard of and have ever been around and been a part of, yeah, they're just filled with people who just loved each other so much.

That's actually what Tertullian said. Tertullian, a historian early on in the life of the church, said in one of his writings, see how they loved each other. It was a great testimony to the body of Christ. Someone said, the mission of the great commission would be much easier if we gave priority to the great commandment. So, my friends, listen to what Paul says as we close. In the twelfth chapter and the ninth verse, Paul just speaks of what Jesus

is talking about, let love be genuine, abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good, love one another with brotherly affection, outdo one another in showing honor. All through the epistles, you see those kinds of words of commendation. When we love each other purposely, intentionally, sacrificially, we do really put on display the badge, the mark of who Jesus has called us to be and what He has called us to do.

So, what is our takeaway? Our prayer this morning, Father, is help us as the body of Christ at Covenant to love each other well. What does that look like? Well, just look at all the one another statements in the New Testament, right? Be at peace. Show hospitality. Honor. Don't judge. Encourage. Don't fight. Serve. Don't envy. Admonish. Wait. Be devoted. Greet. Comfort. Confess. Care for. Bear. Show deference. Forgive. Be kind. Submit. Don't lie. Be in unity. Comfort. Concern yourself in the affairs of each other. Don't hate. Don't speak evil. Pray for one another. Be like-minded. Don't hold a grudge. Highly esteem. Don't be partial. Have fellowship. Edify one another. Teach one another. Do good to one another. Exhort one another. There it is. The command of Jesus. If we, as the body of Christ at Covenant, want to have any impact on this community for Christ, it has to begin with the reputation that these people actually love and care about each other. And that will be the most powerful, impactful, transformative message that we can ever be a part of. And by God's grace, we can do that. By His Spirit empowerment, we can do that. Let's step into that together and love each other well.

And it begins, of course, by accepting and receiving God's great love for us, but God, in His great love, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. So, it begins by acknowledging that I have a problem in my relationship with God because of sin. I'm separated from Him. But what Jesus did on the cross, in that triumph, in that glory, is He made it possible for my sins to be forgiven, and that I would receive the gift of eternal life if I would simply believe and trust in what Jesus did and what He did on the cross for me.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we thank You for the words of our Lord, so powerful, so impactful. And Father, so strong a witness and testimony to the world. And yet, we have to confess, and we have to acknowledge, and we have to repent of the fact that we have often, as the body of Christ, failed to do the very thing that Jesus said. And so, Father, I pray

that by Your Spirit, You will speak this truth into each of our lives, that we will trust You, and we will lean into You, and we will depend on the Holy Spirit to enable us to love, not only You, but to love each other so that we truly can be a witness and a testimony for the life change that has occurred. And we thank You in Jesus' name, amen.