

**The Savior's Love for His Own**

Scripture: John 13:1

Code: 43-67

I want you to turn into your Bible to the thirteenth chapter of John, John chapter 13, John 13. Just a little bit of background to kind of get you up to the point where we can actually look at that verse. This all takes place, what begins in chapter 13, all takes place on Thursday night of the final week of our Lord's life, which is called Passion Week.

You will remember on Monday, He came into the city. Hundreds of thousands of people hailed Him as the Messiah. On Tuesday, He assaulted and attacked the temple, threw out the money changers, the buyers and sellers, and took over the temple on Tuesday. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, He held court in that temple, teaching, giving parables, communicating to the people and interacting with the leaders since overwhelming them and overpowering them in their verbal conflict. That's been going on now Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday, but Thursday night it is time for the Galileans to celebrate Passover.

The Galileans celebrated on Thursday night, the Judeans on Friday, so celebrations began Thursday night. We find ourselves in John 13 on that Thursday night. You can see the way the first verse begins that we are right up against the feast of the Passover. That would be held on that Thursday night. We don't know the date that Jesus was born. We don't know the date in which He was baptized. We know the exact date on which He was crucified, 15th of Nisan in the year A.D. 30 at the Passover at the very time when the lambs were being slaughtered to be offered by the people as sacrifices. We know that date. So when we celebrate Good Friday and Easter Sunday, we are in the zone consistent with the Jewish calendar of the death of our Lord.

We're at Thursday night and He will meet with His disciples in that upper room. He will leave, go through the dark streets of Jerusalem with them trailing along, Judas having been dismissed, they will stop along the way for an incredible event. Then they will proceed to the Garden of Gethsemane. He will pray in agony after midnight on Thursday early into Friday morning. He will be arrested. He will be tried in the middle of the night at mock trials. He will end up being crucified on Friday at exactly the time when the lambs are being offered. We're on Thursday night of that week.

In the narrative texts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, these scenes all move by at a rather consistent pace, but in John, we come to a dead halt at this moment on Thursday night. The next five chapters feature what happens with Jesus and the disciples on that night. Five full chapters. We're going to enter those five chapters in verse 1. In some ways, this is the high point of all four gospels as far as the believer is concerned because here is truth so stunning and staggering that it just reaches beyond our comprehension. If there is anywhere to stop and rest for a long time in the fast-moving narrative of Passion Week, it is here on Thursday night. That's exactly what John forces us to do.

Now, one other thing to consider. The heart of Judaism was the temple, which had been basically designed by God and revealed to man and was built in a manner that followed the instruction that God gave back in the book of Exodus. In the temple, there was a holy place. The people could be

outside in courtyards, but only priests could go into the holy place. They went into the holy place to commune with God through their offerings. Inside the holy place, there was the Holy of Holies or the most holy place. In that place, only one person could go, and that was the high priest. It was for him and him alone, a very brief visit once a year.

That was the center of the worship of Israel by God's design, but by the time we reach this moment in Jewish history, the temple is not God's. It has been turned into a den of robbers from a human viewpoint, and even more, it has been taken over by Satan. It is full of a false and apostate priesthood, corrupt leaders whose father, Jesus said, is the devil. So it is the devil's edifice now. It still has a place called the holy place, but it's unholy. It still has a place called the Holy of Holies, but it also is unholy. But keep that in your mind. Jesus attacked that temple for its corruption. It still has a priesthood, the ironic priesthood still in place, but they are an unholy, unqualified, ungodly priesthood.

However, as we enter John 13, we are going to enter the true holy place; not the temple in Jerusalem because that's an unholy place, but a genuinely holy place. We're going to enter the genuine holy place where the true priests commune with the living Lord. Here in this holy place, we have come to the most spiritual, the most personal, the most intimate, the most glorious fellowship between the Lord and His authentic priesthood.

Here in this holy place, we literally are given access to the secret place of the most high God, available only to true priests. Available only to those whom Peter calls the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people of His own possession, those who are called to proclaim the excellencies of the Glorious One who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. The false and apostate priests of Judaism are completely excluded. They are shut out of this holy place. They are eliminated from all of its astonishing promises, pledges. What our Lord does in this holy place is communicate to His true priests all that He has prepared for them that love Him.

This holy place is a place where they commune with the living Lord, and He unfolds for them heaven's provision for power, protection, peace, all the promises of eternal triumph. This communication of divine promise to the true priest couldn't happen in the physical temple in Jerusalem. It had been taken over by the devil. This is a true holy place. It's not a building. It's not a building, but it is the place where the Holy One is. He sanctifies it. The one who is the Holy One of God, the Lord Jesus creates around Him, His own holy place. Who are the true priests? They are His apostles. They are His apostles. They are the true priests. They are the royal priesthood, the holy people, the people of His own possession.

Now, the presence of the Holy One makes the holy place holy. By the way, it is mobile. The holy place starts in an upper room where Jesus meets with His disciples and has the Passover, and speaks with them and unfolds promises and pledges and commitments that are beyond comprehension, but it doesn't stay in the upper room. This holy place moves. At the end of chapter 14 we read this, Jesus says, "Get up, let's go from here." Jesus gets up from the reclining table in the upper room along with the 11 disciples who were still with Him, Judas having been dismissed, and He takes that royal priesthood out the door of that upper room, and they walk through the dark streets of Jerusalem late, late on Thursday night. The holy place then is moving along in the darkness of Jerusalem.

Along the way, the holy place stops, and a most amazing event takes place described in chapter 17,

and the disciples are a part of that as well. Then finally, the holy place arrives at the Garden of Gethsemane, where our Lord goes to pray. That is the holy place. All along through that moving holy place, from the upper room to the garden, the Lord is speaking and dispensing promises, astonishing promises for His true royal priesthood. As Peter tells us, it's not just the apostles. Peter writes to the believers and says, "You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of His own possession." John allows us all to be there in that upper room.

All of the promises that our holy Lord gives to His royal priests, the apostles, extend to all believers, to every true Christian. In fact, as it all comes to an end in chapter 17 and verse 20, Jesus says, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone," meaning the 11, "but for those who also believe in Me through their word." And extends all of these promises to all believers right down to us and to the end of the age.

The glorious sounding promises of the Lord for His royal priests, His holy people, the people of His own possession are perfectly recorded by John, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in chapters 13 to 16. This is really monumental territory. You will be ushered into a place where only the true royal priesthood can go.

Just as a footnote, some wonder why John omits so many of the details of Passion Week, this final week of our Lord, which Matthew, Mark, and Luke record, some of the more historical details. Why does John omit those? I think the answer is pretty simple. Because Matthew gave them, Mark gave them, and Luke gave them, and that fulfills Deuteronomy which says that truth has to be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses. We don't need another repeat of the testimony of the two or three witnesses. I'm not bothered by the fact that John leaves things out. I'm just grateful that he included what he did because the others left that out.

I love the historical narrative aspect, but nothing compares to this. I am so profoundly grateful and so will you be as we go through this that John, by the Holy Spirit's inspiration included this section. We have the history in three accounts. We have this only here, and it is a treasure beyond treasures. We are allowed into the holy place. We then are given all the promises that belong only to the true priests of God. Then, then we are taken into the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest could go there. In this case, the high priest goes into the Holy of Holies to commune with the Father, but He takes us with Him. He takes us into the inner sanctuary where no one could ever go, where only the high priest could go. And that is chapter 17.

Chapters 13 to 16, the holy place. Chapter 17, the Holy of Holies where no one speaks but the great High Priest, and He prays to His Father, and we're all there. We are indeed a royal priesthood. We are a privileged priesthood taken into the holy place, taken into the Holy of Holies, given access to all of this, even to the intimate personal communion between our great High Priest and His Father. Again, this is not in the temple in Jerusalem. It's the devil's temple. This is in the sanctuary of prayer. I don't know where it was in the night. I don't know where it was along the walk before they got to Gethsemane, but somewhere along the way, Jesus stopped and created a Holy of Holies that was really holy, a sanctuary where He is the great High Priest communed with His Father on our behalf.

We are there because what He said is recorded in chapter 17. No doubt the disciples heard it, and they couldn't have distinguished between what was in 13 to 16 and 17. I'll tell you why. Because the prayer in chapter 17 is that God will do, will fulfill all that Jesus has promised in 13 to 16. He makes

all the promises, and then He prays that the Father will fulfill those promises. Do you understand that? He intercedes for us to the Father, pleading with the Father to grant us everything that He has promised us. If you had any question about the importance of prayer, that ought to end that. Even in the communication within the Trinity, prayer plays a role in the accomplishing of the will of God.

Now, what in the world could motivate the Lord to do this? What He promises in chapters 13 to 16 and what He prays for in chapter 17 are realities that are the essence of what it means to be a believer and to have eternal life. They're vast, far-reaching, infinite promises. But the question is why? Why? What motivates this? What drives this? By now, having come to chapter 13, we're pretty well-acquainted with the apostles, aren't we? You might have expected that at this point, the Lord would have said to the Father, "Could you give Me a different group? These guys are ignorant, heart-hearted, weak, selfish, proud, ambitious, cowardly. They're going to end up fleeing, denying." There is really nothing at this point to commend them. They haven't preached a sermon. They haven't made an impact. They have muddled along trying to figure out what was going on, taking in what the Lord was saying and filtering it through their own predisposed understandings of the way things are supposed to be, leaving them in confusion.

This might have been the time when the Lord said, "Let's try plan B, Father," but no. To these selfish, self-centered men arguing about who is going to be the greatest in the kingdom, to these men who are doubting and will even deny Him and flee when the going gets difficult, He makes promises that are beyond comprehension. This is all about grace. This is all about grace to the underserved, which is what salvation is all about, but why? Why this grace? Why these promises?

All right. Now you come to verse 1. "Now, before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father – " here's the motive, " - having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." What motivated Him? What motivated Him? Love. Not love that arose at this moment; having loved them, already loved them. He loved them all along. He loved them before they knew Him. Love. Love.

This becomes, but the way, the most common word in the next five chapters. Love, love, love, love, love, love again and again. It begins with love in chapter 13, verse 1. It ends with love in chapters 17, verse 26, "So that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them and I in them." It begins with love. It ends with love. It's all about love. The whole of this section is about what the Lord does for those whom He loves. This becomes the most common word in these five chapters, the most common theme.

All the grace, all the mercy, all the boundless blessings, all the lavish gifts that are poured out forever on those who belong to Him are the product of this infinite divine love. And with full knowledge of their ignorance, full understanding of their selfishness, weakness, failure, cowardice, doubt, denial – all of the things that He knows, not only what they've done, but what they will do. In the face of all of that, all these promises are poured out, and it's all motivated by love undeserved. It's about grace.

There are more references to the Savior's love for His own here than anywhere in the Bible. A lot of things in the Bible about the love of God. You can go all the way back to the writings of Moses, Deuteronomy 6 and read about the love of God. You can go back to the prophets like Jeremiah 31 and read about the love of God. You can find the love of God in the Old Testament and certainly you can find a lot of places in the New Testament that talk about the love of God. He loves the world, John 3. He loves His enemies, Matthew 5. But when it comes to Him loving His own, this is the high

point. There is more here that is reflective of the love of the Lord for His own than anywhere in Scripture. This is what I want you to see as we go through this. These are the gifts of love that the Savior gives to underserving sinners like us by sheer grace, and it's just amazing. They're spread through all five chapters.

Let's go back to verse 1, a few details. "Now, before the Feast of the Passover." This is critical. This is critical. This is working up to the Feast of the Passover, which happened on Thursday night. As I said, the Galilean Jews celebrate the Passover Thursday night; the Judean Jews on Friday. So it's just before the evening to celebrate the Passover. Timing is critical. Why is this critical? Because everything in Jesus' life was leading to the final Passover, and this, by the way, was the final legitimate Passover in the history of Israel. But let me give you the lead up, okay?

I looked in the book, *One Perfect Life* where I sort of harmonize all of the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and this is the paragraph that would lead us up to this moment. "Then came the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread when they killed the Passover lamb, and He set out two of His disciples." This is Thursday early in the day. "He sent out two of His disciples, Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare the Passover for us that we may eat.' So they said to Him, 'Where do You want us to go and prepare that you may eat the Passover?' And He said to them, 'Behold, go into the city and when you have entered the city, a certain man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house which he enters wherever he goes in. Say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "My time is at hand. Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples at your house?"' The he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready for us.' So the disciples did as Jesus had directed. They went out and came into the city and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover."

"In the evening, when the hour had come, He – " Jesus " – came and sat down and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'" This is the last Passover. So everything was prepared during the day. Peter and John went. They met the man; the room was found. Later, the rest of them came. Each gospel writer: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John focuses on the precise time and event at which our Lord Jesus was crucified. It was the Passover. It was the Passover. The best calculations would be in the year 30 A.D. It was the month of Nisan. It was the 14th and the 15th day, and He would die on Friday.

He would die at the Passover Feast. What was the Passover Feast? It was a slaughter. It was a slaughter. Everybody came from all over the known world, all the Jews came back to the feast. It was the most well-attended feast and they brought lambs or they bought lambs and they slaughtered them for two days. And it was a remembrance of the slaughter of the lambs in Egypt and the blood splattering on the door so that they would be delivered from the angel of death and rescued out of Egypt. God ordained that to be remembered every year to demonstrate that God was a deliverer so that they would always look back and see that God delivered His people through the death of an innocent lamb.

It not only looked back; it looked forward to the day when God would deliver His people, not from Egypt, not from a political entity or a national entity, but God would deliver His people from their sins by the death of a sacrificial lamb. The feast was a memorial to God's salvation of Israel from Egyptian slavery, a salvation that was triggered by the death of a lamb. Passover lambs all through Israel's history became the most clear symbol of salvation, clear symbol of rescue and deliverance

and, as such, were pictures and types of the Lamb of God whose sacrifice would take away the sins of the world, as John the Baptist said it.

The purpose of every Passover lamb that was ever slain was calculated to communicate God's redemption of His people, not only in the past from Egypt, but in the future from their sin. So while the Passover looked back, it also looked forward to the time when the true Lamb would come because no one could be justified by the blood of bulls and goats. Furthermore, Passover drew the largest number of Jewish pilgrims who were scattered, came back, which meant that the marvelous reality of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and His resurrection would be in the mouth of the most people going back to the most places to herald the gospel.

It had to happen at Passover because He was the fulfillment of Passover. In the New Testament He's called "Christ, our Passover" and to have it happen at this feast also guaranteed that the most people would be talking about it when they went back to their homes. Jesus knew this. It says in verse 1, "Jesus, knowing that His hour had come." In fact in John 18:4 it says, "He knew all that would happen to Him." Think about that. Think about that. I know people are fascinated with knowing the future. Let me tell you something. I have never had any interest in knowing the future. Sufficient unto the day is the suffering thereof. I don't need to know what's coming. It's enough to try to deal with what is. It is a gift from God that you don't know the future. Ignorance of future pain, ignorance of future suffering is a blessing. So you only suffer when you suffer.

Look, it's enough anticipation just living in a world where you know something is going to go wrong; you just don't know what it is. Or worse, if you knew every single thing that was coming. That was true of Christ. He must have died a million times. He must have been crucified in His mind a million times. He must have been agonizing for His whole conscious life knowing what was coming. He knew exactly, specifically, precisely, perfectly everything that was going to happen to Him. No wonder His body broke down, His capillaries burst, and He started to have blood pouring through His pores in the agony of accumulated anticipation. It wasn't just the anticipation of that late Thursday in the garden. It was the anticipation of a whole life of knowing what was coming. And in the midst of that, He said, "Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done," willingly.

Why? Why would He do that? Why would He come and go through that? As Hebrews 12:2 says, "He endured, despising the shame for the joy that was set before Him," for the joy that was set before Him. What was that joy? That joy was to be seated at the right hand of God's throne and to have gathered around Him all the redeemed to worship and praise Him forever. Having done the Father's will at the cross, He secured the eternal salvation of all those upon whom His divine love had been fixed. He knew what was coming. He knew every detail. He even spoke of the details. He knew everything perfectly. You might wonder why there was a sadness about His life if you didn't know that.

Then it says in verse 1, "He knew that His hour had come, but He knew that He would depart out of this world to the Father." In chapter 17, He starts His prayer by saying, "Father, restore to Me the glory I had with You before the world began." He knew exactly where He was going. He knew it was death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation. By the way, that's the plan for us, for every believer: death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation. Well, you say, "Well why would He do all this if He's going to end up where He started?" He came from the Father's throne. He's going back to the Father's throne. Why would He do this? The difference is He goes back and gathers around Him all on whom God has fixed His eternal, everlasting, saving love. He redeemed humanity to worship and

praise Him forever.

Why does He do this? Why does He come to save us? He loves us. He has set His love on us. That's the end of the verse. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." It's an unbreakable love. If He started loving, He will love to the end. It has no deviation. To the end is *eis telos*. It means completely, perfectly, fully, utterly, to the max, to the end, both in terms of capacity and eternity. He loves as much as He can love. As much as God can love, that's how much He loves. And for as long as God loves, that's how long He loves, which is to say He loves infinitely both in capacity and in time.

We're introduced then at this point in verse 1 to this dominant theme, and the dominant theme of all of these chapters is this astounding love that He has for His own. It says, "Having loved His own," implied the already. "Having loved His own," already. He's been loving His own since before they even knew Him. While we were enemies, He loved us. Having already loved His own, nothing can change that. He loves them to the max, to the end infinitely, utterly, completely, perfectly.

How is that love measured? Well, the Bible is full of statements about the love of God. But you don't even need to go beyond these chapters that are in front of us right now. God's love for His own mentioned there in verse 1 is then explained in the next five chapters. Let me help you with just a little summary. It isn't romantic love. It isn't sentimental love. It isn't emotional love. It isn't fickle love. It is fixed eternal love that provides eternal salvation, eternal blessing, and eternal glory. What we're going to learn in these chapters is this. I'll give you a list. It is gracious love. We don't deserve it. It is sovereign love. He loved us first. "We love Him because He first loved us." It is redeeming love. It is love that reached out and sought us and bought us. It is unconditional love. It is not predicated on anything we have done and in full awareness of our wretchedness. It is faithful love to the very end. Nothing can separate us from this love, nothing, Romans 8.

It is intercessory love. He loves us so much that He intercedes for us at all times, ever living to interceded for us before the throne of God so that everything He pledged and promised to us is delivered. It is sacrificial love. "Greater love hath no man than this," John 15:13, "that a man lay down his life for his friends." It is a love that demanded the greatest sacrifice. It is generous love. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. It is this lavish, incomprehensible love.

So let me say it again. It is gracious love, sovereign love, redeeming love, unconditional love, faithful love, intercessory love, sacrificial love, and generous love. How much does He love us? Look how generous He is. This eternal, everlasting infinite love is behind all that He promises in this section. Now, I don't have time to show you specific verses, but here's what we're going to look at. How much does He love us? What does He give us?

The first thing He gives us right out of the gate in chapter 13 is an example of humility, an example of humility when He washes the disciples' feet. Why is that important? Because we need to know what humility is because humility is the path to grace, because God gives grace to the humble. God gives grace to the humble. God exalts those who abase themselves. So the greatest spiritual virtue is humility. Here is a treasure; we have an example of humility, the purest virtue and the path to effective evangelism. Yes, yes, humility is the path to evangelism because humility is behind love, and they will know us by our love.

He not only gives us an example of humility; He gives us a new commandment to love and then gives us the capacity to love. He gives us the capacity to love in a way that we can't love before we come to Christ. "A new commandment to love as I have loved you and a new capacity to do that." In chapter 14, He gives us a home in heaven and then a promise to come and get us and take us there. In chapter 14 and 15, He gives us a promise to supply everything we need, everything He knows we need, He will supply and hold nothing back. He promises to give us and has the Holy Spirit as our helper, our comforter, and our truth teacher, chapter 14, chapter 15.

He promises to give us peace, a perfect peace. He promises to give us spiritual productivity, to give us life pouring through us so that we bear much fruit for His glory. He promises to make us intimate family, not just slaves – friends, sons. He promises to give us joy, endless, boundless joy. He promises in chapter 15 and 16 to give us triumph in the face of persecution. In chapter 15, He pledges to give us power to proclaim the gospel, and then promises that He will grant to us the power of the Holy Spirit to do the convicting of the sinner so that the sinner can respond to the gospel, chapter 16.

So what are we saying? He give us the path of humility, which is the path to effective evangelism, love, and grace. He gives us the capacity to love, a home in heaven, a promise to take us there, a pledge to supply everything we need, the helper, the Holy Spirit, who is also the truth teacher. He promises us a resurrection, perfect peace, spiritual fruit, joy, triumph in persecution, power to proclaim the gospel and divine help to convict the sinner.

Then, as if that's not enough, I will ask you to look at chapter 16, verse 15. "All things that the Father has are Mine. All things that the Father has are Mine." Just think about that. "All that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said He takes of Mine and will give it to you." He gives you everything. Whatever might have been left out up to this point, all things that belong to God, all things that belong to Christ, He gives to us. It's just amazing. Verse 23, John 16:23, "In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you." Anything in My name. Verse 24, "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full."

Everything, all things, anything, all that belongs to God, all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, to borrow Paul's language, are available and granted to us. This is the lavish nature of the love of the Lord for His own royal priesthood. Oh, by the way, by the way, all along He keeps giving us more and more and more love. Chapter 14, verse 21, "He who has My commandments, keeps them - " that's a believer, " – is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father and I will love Him, and will disclose Myself to him." More love.

Verse 23, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." Chapter 15, verse 9, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love." Verse 10, "If you keep My commandments, you'll abide in My love; just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love." Verse 12, "This is My commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you." Verse 13, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." Verse 17, "This I command you that you love one another." Love, love, love, love. More love from the Father. More love from the Son. More love from those around us and to those around us. Love, love, love.



Really the dominant reality in the Christian experience is what? Love. Why all this? Why all this? Verse 27, chapter 16, “For the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me.” We’re all caught up in a crazy, amazing, incomprehensible love relationship. After all those promises that run through the end of 16, Jesus then goes into the Holy of Holies in 17 and prays to the Father to fulfill everything He’s promised, and that’s what He does.

These are things that we’re waiting for. These are realities that we possess. These aren’t things that you need to pray for. These are things you have. We don’t even understand the richness of His love toward us, but we will as we take this section by section.

Father, we are grateful beyond comprehension for your love to us. We could never repay you for this kind of lavish love, but we can humbly offer the best we have and give you back a loving, obedient heart.

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