

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Fully Alive

PART

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TITLE

By All This People Will Know

SCRIPTURE

John 13:31-38



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Well, it's great to see you here this morning. If you're a guest here at Providence, welcome. We're glad that you've joined us. I want to ask you to turn with me, in God's word, to John, Chapter 13. If you did not have one with you, there's lots of Bibles in the seats around. If you don't have one home, please take that home as a gift, but it is great to see you. We've been gone for most of the last two weeks, so after 10 international flights and three continents, we bring back a cold, for one, but also a lot of greetings from families who are just like you, who came here to Providence and heard this book, preached and read and taught. God burdened their heart with the truth, that there really is only one way. That He's the way, the truth and the life, and outside of Jesus Christ, no one can come to the father.

They moved all over the world, and are serving in all different ways. Over the last two weeks, we've seen about 15 of our families and just had the opportunity just to hear their stories and just to pray with them and to serve them. They are amazing families. We give thanks for them. We also want to pray for them. If you would, let's bow, okay? As we do that.

Father in Heaven, we want to thank you for this book, how it changes people's lives. God has changed my life, where for most if not all of those in this room, it's changed our lives. For the families, who have sat in these very seats, on mornings just like this. Have sung and then have had this book read, or they've read it themselves and have seen your plan for the world. That you love us and that you care for us and that you came for us and you rescued us in Jesus Christ. Have gone with that message to tell people who have never heard it and who have no real capacity to hear it, unless somebody goes and tells them. We want to thank you for each one of these families.

We pray, Father, for your blessing upon them, that you would protect them, or would you provide for them? Would give them endurance and hope? God, this week would you give them favor with people to be able to have the opportunity Lord, to start a friendship with new people who have never heard of the Gospel, never heard of Christ and what Christ has done for us. We pray Father, that you would give them favor, that you would truly protect them or many of whom live in places where it's not legal to preach this or to even have this book. We pray, God for your Grace in your life, would you save people as a result of them being there and sharing the gospel of Christ?

God, as we read it ourselves this morning, these amazing verses, would you do the miracle in each one of our lives, Lord, to help us to believe what it says. To really understand what it means for our life. God, would you also give us the courage in our life, where to break down all of the walls that would stand in front of our obedience to it. That you would help us to apply it to our life rightly. Lord, we look to you. Would you be our teacher? Would you speak through weakness and we ask God that you would give Christ all of the Glory. We love you and we pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

Have you ever done something in love with the intent to really bless somebody very specifically and yet your actions, at first were not received by the recipient to be ones of love. About 20 years ago, this really took place in my life. It's the paramount story of where I was seeking to give love and somebody else was not thinking that that was what was taking place. About 20 years ago, I was in St. Louis Missouri and I had a job, I wasn't paid a whole lot, but I took all the money that I had and I went and I bought a ring and a plane ticket to Paris. In order to go and ask Tabitha to marry me. At the time, she was from Georgia, serving the Lord overseas in West Africa, and her family had made plans to meet and celebrate Christmas in France. Her sister was in France already.

Their whole family went there and in about 14 days before that plane ticket said that I needed to get on that plane, I wasn't planning to go. About 14 days prior to that, I made plans with her mother and dad to join them, but also to surprise Tabitha. I had 14 days basically to mobilize all the resources that were within my reach in order to accomplish this, which was my time, vacation time, it was seriously, all of my money. I did so enjoy ... It was an amazing time, but what was interesting was during that time, ironically, when I would call her on the phone, and she'd ask about my day, there's nothing that I could really tell her. I became very aloof.

What was so ironic was at the very moment when I was mobilizing everything I had in order to draw her near, she was thinking that I was drawing away. That I didn't really want to talk to her and I didn't want to share what was going on with my day. It was really a fascinating scenario.

What we find here in John 13 is something very similar. At the very start of the chapter, Jesus is with his 12 disciples and they're at a table. This is the night before he's going to be killed on a cross. He's going to give up his life for us. There, he notices that they're still arguing who is the greatest. He gets up and he takes off his outer garment, and he gets a basin of water and he goes and he begins to wash each of their feet. The greatest became the lowest in order to serve the lowest to bring them up. Then he says this is an example that I give to you. I want you to follow me in living like this.

It's interesting then Jesus, as we keep reading through the chapter, he identifies Judas as the traitor. Now here in our text, it's really fascinating is right after he says, "I've set an example for you, I want you to follow me now in doing this," Jesus is going to say in our text, "I'm going to be going somewhere and you can't follow me." For these men who've been following him now for three years, they look and they perceive it as if he's drawing away. Yet, he was drawing away specifically because he had to go and do something that only he could do. Only he could go to that cross, and in doing so, even though the perception was that he was going away from them, he was actually drawing them close.

Let's read it, starting at verse 31 it says, "When he had gone out," that's Judas, "Jesus had said, 'Now is the son of man glorified and God is glorified in him.' If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify him in Himself and glorify him at once, 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 say to you; 'Where I am going, you can not come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have love 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. Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus answered him, 'Where I am going, you can not follow me now but you will follow afterward.' Peter said to him, 'Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' Jesus answered, 'Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly I say to you the rooster will not crow 'til you have denied me three times.'"

Two things that I want you to see here; as Jesus is preparing to go to the cross in his conversations with his disciples, two things for us. Number one, as we prepare for the Lord's Supper is that Jesus endured the cross alone. He planned to endure the cross alone, to draw us near. This is such a gift because we could not come close to the Lord. We could have no confidence in drawing near to the Lord had he not done this. Jesus says, "Little children, yet in a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews before, so now I'm going to say to you: 'Where I am going, you can not come.'"

It's an interesting thing, because when it actually took place, just a few hours later, which in John represents a few chapters later. We get to John, chapter 16 and in John 16:32, Jesus will say the hour is coming, indeed it has come. It is right now, when you will be scattered, each to his own home and will leave me alone. Jesus, who's sovereign, he knows all things. He knows what's directly in front of him. He also knows things about these disciples, so you have to ask the question, why could they not come now?

He says, "One day you will follow me down a path, but not tonight." Why not tonight? I think there's two reasons that we see in the text, the first reason is because they weren't strong enough yet, and Jesus knew that. He knew that they were not strong enough yet to endure the challenges, that they one day would endure in order to be associated with Jesus Christ. This is like when a father who is a weight lifter, he's at the gym with his little son. His son looks at all the weight that he's lifting and he says, "Dad, let me try, let me try." Dad says, "Son, one day you'll be strong enough to lift this, but not now. You're not ready yet."

What's interesting is, as we keep reading through the scriptures is that these 11 men, they would grow strong. So strong that 10 of the 11 gave their life for Jesus. Believing in him is the only way the truth and the life and going out and they were martyred, they were persecuted for Jesus. One day they got there, but they were not there this night.

Peter, Peter always had a hard time with God's timing and he says, in essence, Jesus, I disagree. I think I am ready. He says, "Where are you going?" Jesus says, "Peter, look. You can not follow me now, but you'll be able to follow me afterward." Peter responds, "Well, why can't I follow you now? I'll lay down my life for you." Jesus responds, "Really? Will you?" Then he says these unique words that John uses frequently in order to get to Jesus' main point, and it's "Truly, truly I say to you ..." It's sort of like Jesus walking up to Peter, grabbing him by the ears and focusing to where his eyes are directly in front of his eyeballs and he says, "Peter, I want you to know something. Before the rising of the next son, you will deny any association with me three different times."

We read the story and two times it's by a little girl. He's so intimidated by a little girl asking him, "Aren't you one of his disciples? Don't you know Jesus?" Peter will three times say, "No, I have no recollection of the man. I was not his follower." He denied him three different times. Jesus knew that this would take place. Of course, Peter was not alone, for that very night when they would go out to the garden, sure enough they were all scattered and Jesus was alone.

There's a second reason why he had to do this alone, and it's because Jesus had to cut a path to God so that we could later travel that path. This is the amazing thing of what God has done. You see, God's word tells us that the entire world has been infest with thorns and thistles. It's a curse of the fall that when we rebuild against God, the world spiritually began to look like this picture. It was a jungle, to where God was on one side and we were on the other side. We had no map, we had no capacity to get there what so ever.

What the Bible says is that Jesus came from Heaven to Earth as the son of God. He lived a righteous life and in living a righteous life, he was able to do what only he could do. Jesus went through this path, on this night he's saying, "I have to go. I have a sword with me and I'm going to cut a path. I'm going to cut a channel through this spiritual forest that you can not travel." In doing so, when I get to the end and I get to my father, I'm going to be able to turn around and say, "Now, everybody, everybody who believes in me, walk this path by faith. I have to do this alone."

This same conversation of, "Where, Jesus are you going?" Will continue next week when we get to John chapter 14. He's going to say, "Look guys, in my father's house there's many rooms. If I don't go, I can't prepare a place for you there, but I'm going to prepare a place for you there." Then he gets to verse six, in John 14:6 is the verse that we're memorizing as a church family in January, so let's say it as a church family. "Jesus says 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father, except through me.'"

In other words, Jesus is saying, “Guys listen to me, you can not follow me tonight because I need to die for your sin first. I came to the Earth for this purpose. See, no one else has walked the Earth without sin. No one else is the Son of God. No one else can remove my father’s wrath that’s now directed at you, except for me. I have come down to walk this path tonight, alone, in order to make the way to my father, for many. Once I have cut this trail, then I’m going to call you to follow me by faith, and afterward, you will follow me, Peter.”

See Jesus, he endured all of what he endured. He did it alone, and he did it alone in order to draw us near. At the very moment, these disciples felt like Jesus was going away from them, he was actually drawing closer to them than he’s ever been. Cutting a channel for them to be able to come to him, and in coming to him to come to the father. By way of application, I think two things are pertinent to us. Number one is this, let’s trust Jesus and draw near to God. Do you see that you are loved? Some of you don’t feel loved this morning, you feel alone, rejected, abandoned. You need to know that you are loved. You are loved.

Jesus endured the abandonment of all of his friends, of all of his disciples, and he also endured the separation of his own father, for you. See, while Jesus hung on that cross, he said to the father, “Father, father, why have you forsaken me?” He’s done all of this for you and for me. He died between two thieves for us, he died for our sin as a substitute for us. When he rose from the dead, he said to us, “Now, follow me. You see, nobody else has loved you like I have loved you, so follow me. No one else has dealt with your sin issue, but me, so follow me. Nobody is as committed to your life and your good and your blessing than I am, so follow me. Nobody can help you navigate your eminent death but me, so follow me.”

In following him, Jesus says that this very act and our faith constitutes of Jesus being glorified in ways that perhaps we don’t have the stomach to even accept. It’s an amazing thing, what he does here. Look at Verse 31. At the very moment that Judas walks out of the room after being called the traitor, and he goes with evil intent in order to bring Jesus to their hands and so that he would die, Jesus uses the word, “Now.” ‘Now’ is the son of man glorified. This is an amazing thing, if you think about it, that the most concentrated, colorful display of the glory of God is seen in the cross and what Jesus is saying is, is once Judas left the room to go and betray Jesus, that the wheels of the gears began to spin that was going to make the cross an eminent reality, that this was going to happen and it was going to happen tomorrow.

Jesus says that, “Not only am I right now being glorified, but my father’s being glorified. The reason for this is that the glory of this night was the imminent triumph of a salvation that God the father and God the son had planned before the creation of the world in order to bring you and me home.” Jesus knew what was going to take place. You and I love glory. We love glorious things. We love a sunset and a sunrise and mountains and oceans and waves. We love color and art and sculptures. We love people, we love relationships. All of these things are displays of his glory on the earth but what Jesus is saying is this: Is that if you want to see the most concentrated display of my glory, you will see it when I came to this earth, and when I hung on a cross as the lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. He did this so that we could draw near.

If you have not trusted Christ as your savior and Lord and you're banking on your righteousness today in order to get you to God, you're thinking that you can cut through the spiritual forest and make it there, the Bible tells you that you can't. The Bible also tells you that you have a friend that sticks closer to you than a brother. His name is Jesus, who came to rescue you, who came to die for you, in order that you could know him personally. For those of us who know him personally as our savior and Lord, the invitation is still the same, draw near. He wants to be with you. He wants to be with you this morning. He wants you to interact with him. He wants you to talk with him. He loves to hear your voice. He wants to speak to you through his word.

He's done all this, it would be an absolute tragedy for us not to draw near. The second thing though, I want you to see by way of application is that we should put away self reliance and walk together. You see, the first point speaks to the fact that Jesus has done all of this for us. We need to go to the father. The second point of the application says that we need to go to the father together. That this is his plan. That, love and relationships and accountability are part of the journey. You see, Peter thought he was so strong didn't he? He thought that there's nothing that can take place tonight that's going to shake my confidence enough that I'm going to deny you. He says, "I will even die with you and for you tonight, if need be."

It's an interesting thing though, that we can read in Matthew's account that there's a few other parts of the conversation that John chose not to include that I want to read to you. In Matthew 26:31, this should be in the screen for you, it says this. "Then Jesus said to them, you will all fall away because of me this night, for it is written I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered but after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. Peter answered him, though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away. Jesus said to him, 'Truly I tell you this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times,' and Peter said to him, 'Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you,' and all the disciples said the same thing. Jesus said, 'You're all going to fall away and Peter looks at the Son of God and says, 'Not going to happen. You can count on this, Jesus. I will be with you to the end. If it means I have to die next to you, I'll die next to you.'"

Not only was he pretty confident in his own abilities, but he was also very comfortable in his isolation. What a tragic thing to say in front of your friends. Though all of these fall away, Jesus, it wouldn't surprise me either, they're a bunch of boneheads. Even if they all fall away, one thing you can count on is this, I'll still be there. In other words, I don't even need them. I can travel this path with you alone. I don't need the loving encouragement and accountability. I don't need people praying for me, I can make it alone.

It's an amazing thing that many of us feel the same way. We live our life without the mutual companionship of other people that help us to run together to the Lord. Have you ever seen these bike races that go like, 20 days, you know the France one. It's France, right? Yeah, it is. Got all these amazing riders, I mean, it really is an amazing thing and every day it's the same narrative, right? You have a big group of people, it's called the Pelleton and then you have a few people that try to break away in order to win the race all by themselves. The people in the front, they have to endure all the wind themselves. When they break away, it's a risk. They're saying, "If I can win this stage, then perhaps I can win this thing." Yet at the same time, it's a risk because they're doing it in isolation.

Every day of this race, this Pelleton, here's a shot of them. They chase after these rogue riders who are trying to do it alone. If you think about a Pelleton, these guys are, they're really going fast. IT doesn't look like it right now, but they're really going fast. If you think about it, they're probably bumping into each other, they're probably like getting on each other's nerves, because somebody's riding too close to another. Just like life. Just like friendship. It's interesting that if you're in the back or in the middle, sometimes you don't even have to pedal because the wind literally wraps around and it actually begins to push you from behind so that if you're in the Pelleton, not only can it go faster, but the majority of people don't have to work as hard. They even take turns going to the front because the guys in the front have to take on all of the wind resistance.

This is the same thing as the family of faith. Some of you are trying to ride alone. You face all the resistance alone. This is not his plan. His plan is that you would be a part of the Pelleton, which is a local body of believers where people know you and where you know them. Where people pray for you and you pray for them. Here at Providence, we organize in smaller groups where that can take place, it's called Life Groups. At the beginning of this year, we want to just put before you an invitation if you're not a part of a community of people who know you, pray for you, who love you and whom you can do the same to them, would you consider being a part of the race? In running and living and walking in a way that God has designed you and me, God has designed this race to be run. Would you consider walking together?

The second thing that I want you to see is that Jesus endured this cross alone to enable us to love. It's a beautiful thing that God loves. Love for us has always been a part of his plan because we're created in the image of God who loves. When we love, we're simply putting forth a display manifestation of our creator. When we care for people, when we're patient with people, when we're generous to people, when we sacrifice for people. We're displaying a little glimpse of shadow of who he really is. Love is always been his plan and yet when we sinned against God and broke fellowship, we continue to love, we just loved in the wrong direction.

The heart, and our capacity to love was unaltered. What was altered was the direction and the target of our love. Instead of loving God and each other perfectly, we just began to love ourselves with all the love that we could muster. What's interesting though is when we love ourself in that way, we become very selfish and sour. Other people look at us and say, "That person's not very loving." Actually, we're still loving a whole lot, we're just loving the wrong things. It's interesting that the Bible actually says in Matthew 22:40, God says that "You can sum up the entire Old Testament and every command and instruction that I've ever given you in just two commands, love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself." It's a beautiful thing and yet it's interesting that at this very moment, once Judas left, once the wheels of the gears started to spin and all of a sudden it was time for Jesus to go to the cross, he says, "A new commandment that I give to you."

You say, "Well, how is this new?" The command to love is not new. All the way back, all the way back in Leviticus, we actually read, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." In Matthew Chapter 22, Jesus is asked a question, "What's the greatest commandment?" He says, "Well, it's to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all your soul, with all of your mind and the second command is similar. It's like it, he says, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" The command to love is not the new commandment that he's giving here. The measurement of our love is what's new.

Did you notice in both of those, it says the measurement of our neighbor love is our self love. Love others as you love who? Yourself. As you enjoy a coat when you're cold, if you see somebody else who is cold, maybe you should work to seek to get them a coat. All of a sudden, Jesus says but a new commandment that I give you. He says, "Now instead of using your love for yourself, your commitment for your good as the measurement of how much love you give to other people," he goes, "Here's a new measurement." He says, "Love other people as I have loved you." As I have loved you? Well, how has he loved us? The Bible says in Ephesians 5:2, it says "Walk and love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us." Romans 5:8 says that God displayed his own love for us and that while we were still sinners, he died for us.

Christ's love is displayed by two different adjectives. One, his sacrifice, and one his grace. In other words, there is no such thing as Christian Love without a price. He says that he gave himself. In other words, you and I can not love as Christ loved us without it costing us something. He also says that it has to be marked by graciousness. In other words, he says that while we were still sinning he did all this for us. In other words it was undeserved. That when we love other people, oftentimes we choose to love people when they're lovely. We choose lovely people to love as we love ourself. What Jesus says is, "No, you need to choose people who actually are unlovely, who are not deserving of such." Even at the moment when they're not deserving as such, you still love sacrificially as I have loved you.

You got to ask the question, how is this even remotely possible? For us, to love like the son of God, but John picks this up in his first little letter, 1 John. In 1 John 2:8-10 this is what it says. It says, “This is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in Him,” that is Christ, “and in you. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in the darkness, and whoever loves his brother abides in the light.” What it says there, which is true in him and in you, it marks the biggest mark of distinction of what love is in the New Testament and it’s this, “Love is not what takes place outside of you, but what takes place inside of you.”

It’s not so much what we do, it’s who we are. What he says here, is that when we’re loving in this kind of way, when we’re trusting Christ with our life, he says that we are literally abiding to the light, we’re abiding to the vine. See, when you and I trust Christ, we’re like branches that are grafted into the vine. Or maybe like an appliance that’s plugged into the wall. All of a sudden this appliance, which has the great capacity to do something special, if it’s not plugged in to the source of power, it can do nothing. It’s the same thing with you and I. Apart from Christ, we’re not enabled to love like Christ loved us. Once we are connected to Christ by faith and his spirit is working within us and we’re grafted to him divine, all of a sudden, God makes it possible for us to live and love in new and startling ways.

This is why at the end he says, “By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.” You see, Jesus is saying here something that’s so critically important. He says, “Guys, you know that you’re marked as my followers because people see you following me around the wilderness in Judea. The time is coming really shortly where I’m not going to be around here physically for you to follow around. The mark of your distinction is not going to be that you walk with me through Judea, the new mark of your distinction is that you’re going to love like I love people when I was on this earth.” You see Providence? What Jesus is saying is that people are going to know us as his disciples not by our programs, and not by our events and not by our buildings and not by our books and not by our sermons and not by our scholarship, but by our love.

By way of applications, let’s show ourselves to be his disciples by our love. For these are crucial days for us, as a body of believers here. We’re doing a great number of things, programs and events and new ministry endeavors and building and mission trips. As we do all that, I want to encourage you to remember to lean in to love. To love one another and to love people outside of this building. You see, I want to encourage us to lay down our preferences in love for one another for the sake of unity. I want to encourage us to continue to lay down our parking spot and our resources and our time for one another. I want to encourage you to love across racial lines. I want to encourage you to love the weakest among us and the oldest among us and the youngest among us and those with special needs among us. The widows among us and the orphans among us. For while it is absolutely certain that our love will not atone for anyone’s sin when we do love as Christ loved us, we display and manifest the love of the one who can.

God has given us an amazing gift called the Lord's Supper that we get to do right now, that he gave us to profess this very thing. Our love for him and our love for each other. To remember his sacrifice, that he went and did this for us alone, so that we can be brought near. For those of you who will be serving us, if you want to go ahead and stand and head back to the back to get ready. The supper as you know, it consists of two elements, bread and the cup. The bread is symbolic of his body and the cup symbolic of his blood. To take of this, it literally means what you're saying is that you're confessing to other people around you that you're acknowledging Jesus as the Savior of your life. To hold this bread and to hold this cup, it literally is a confession of your faith and your sin.

It's interesting that for those of you who have started the plan to read through the scriptures, we read on Friday, Jesus said the words, he said, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge before my Father in Heaven." There's a lot of ways to do it on the Earth and one of the ways is to take the Lord's supper. When other people in this room see you hold those things, you're acknowledging. You're saying, "I am associating myself courageously with Jesus Christ and I don't care who knows."

For those of you who have yet to trust Christ, we would ask you to pass these along. If you have trusted Christ, we welcome you to the table to take. I'm going to pray in here and then as they're being passed, I would encourage you to do just what Paul told us to do in 1 Corinthians and that is to first ask God to look into our heart and see if there's any unconfessed sin in our life. To examine ourselves. If God reveals something to you, then you confess that to him, because we want to take this with a clear conscience.

If you would, let's bow and let's pray together. Father in Heaven, we thank you for your incredible love for us. God, without it we have no hope. With it, we have all the hope in the world. Jesus, you've been good to us. We acknowledge that you came to rescue us so as we take of these elements, we pray that you would stir our hearts afresh with affection, and with faith and with love for you, and for each other. We acknowledge you and we trust you. We pray this in Christ's name, amen.



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