COMMUNION SERIES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
THE ONE WHO TEACHES US THE PRIMACY OF LOVE
John 13:1-38

This chapter is one of the masterpieces of Christian literature that sears itself on the mind of anyone who has heard or read it. Indeed, the foot-washing scene is made more vivid by contrasts with the human miscues of the self-assured Peter. It is also highlighted by the hostile action of Judas the betrayer. When you add the fact that this chapter contains a new commandment to the Christian community (13:34), these establish this chapter as crucial in the development of both Christian doctrine and practice.

In its entirety, Jesus teaches us how basic love is to our Christian confession and practice:

1. THE PROOF OF LOVE: SERVANTHOOD (vv. 1-17)

- **The Context:**
  - ○ Repeated quarrels over greatness among them (Luke 22:24; also Luke 9:46 & Matthew 20:20-24).
  - ○ The magnitude of Jesus' love for His disciples (v. 1)

- **The Event (vv. 2-11): The Personal Humiliation of a King.**

- **The Implication (vv. 12-17): "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."**

  √ Love is great when expressed with words, but it is best when expressed by actions.

  √ So for us today, in the immortal words of Jesus Christ, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (v. 17)

2. THE PROBLEM OF LOVE: SELFISHNESS (vv. 18-30; 36-38)

- **Judas – The Problem with Hidden Agendas (vv. 18-30)**
  Judas has been an enigma through the centuries. Many theories trying to explain his behavior and betrayal but one that seems likely is that he wanted Jesus for what he could get for himself. At the very least he got money from following Jesus (John 12:6), and possibly wanted Jesus to be a political messiah because that was a common expectation from Jesus' superficial followers (John 6:15).

√ Beware of "following" Jesus from a hidden agenda. What is hidden from men, is not hidden with God. As Jesus said, "Be on your guard against … hypocrisy. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." (Luke 12:1-2)

• **Peter – The Problem with an "I" Problem (vv. 36-38)**
Like Peter, there are many good men, even sincere followers of Christ who have "I" disease. Notice their favorite topic of conversation; their usual point of reference.

√ If you have an "I" problem, get treatment as soon as you can. Study the life of Jesus, read the words of Jesus, apply the words of Jesus, and it will be impossible to keep being sick of "I" disease. No one can possibly keep looking at the life, and keep heeding the words, of the most selfless Person who ever lived and remain unchanged!

3. THE PRACTICE OF LOVE: SELF-SACRIFICE (vv. 31-35)

• The word "glorified" that Jesus used repeatedly is a figure of speech for His crucifixion and eventual exaltation through His resurrection and ascension. But the key to all of this, the door to His glorification, was to be crucified and pay the price for our sins.

• In view of His imminent departure, out of love for His disciples, Jesus gives them the bottom line of what proving our Christianity is all about: to love others with the same kind of love that Jesus showed – a self-sacrificing kind of love.

√ Until I have sacrificed, it is hard for me to prove that I have really loved. By definition, genuine love willingly gives itself up for the benefit of its recipient (Ephes. 5:25). That's the reason love "never fails". Loving another person is never a failure, whatever the outcome, and whatever the recipient's response.

Final Thoughts:
Before Jesus gave the New Commandment, He demonstrated it. Then John showed two vivid contrasts – two failures – one who was eventually redeemed, another who was perpetually damned.

Because we all fail and we may ask ourselves who of these two failures represents the story of our lives, Jesus gives the criteria for discernment: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). How do we measure up?