

I quite like the cartoon strip I saw once in which a man came across a flower growing in a field. Slowly he pulled the petals off, "she loves me....she loves me not....she loves me..." The final picture was of the man walking away from a bare stem which said, "I hope she pulls his arms off".

Well as we continue our series through John 13-15 we have been made aware of the love of Jesus for his disciples in such away that we certainly don't need to pull petals off flowers to decide it.

From the first of the series we were shown that John 13:1 acts as the context for the rest of the book, "It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."

Jesus showed them the full extent of his love. This is the basis of what we are seeing in this series and especially in this passage 14:15-31 this morning.

The first thing I want is to see is

Jesus' love for the disciples

We see that in many ways through the verses we have already looked at:

1. 13:5 he served them in humility – service is one of the marks of the love of Jesus.
2. 13:21 he showed the limitless nature of his love in his concern for Judas. He was troubled in spirit and part of that surely was because he knew what lay before the one who would betray him.
3. 13:34 he commanded them to love as he loved. Only after the cross would they understand the extent of the love of Christ in terms of his sacrifice. Sacrifice is another mark of the love of Jesus.
4. 14:1 his love was evident in his concern for his disciples. He knew they were worried by his saying he was going away and, as we saw last week he tried to deal with those worries. He does that again in our passage today. If we look at v18 we see this. To use the word orphan may seem odd in that he wasn't their parent but the point is clear, he didn't want them to feel abandoned by him. He knew what was in their hearts and was concerned for them and yes, as he says at the end of the verse, he will come to them in his resurrection body but in his love he wanted to remove their fear. I remember some years ago taking our two children to the cinema to watch Little Mermaid a Disney film. It wasn't really scary but at one point when Ursula the wicked octopus came on the screen I had both children on my lap, the closeness of Dad helping remove the fear. Here Jesus was assuring them that they will continue to enjoy his closeness but in a different way. That leads to
5. 14:16 in love he assured them of one who will come to be with them.

This passage is one of a number in John which points us to the work and role of the Holy Spirit but we need to see that his role stems out of Jesus love for the disciples. Aware of their concerns over his going away he promised to ask the Father to give them another Counsellor. Two things to note there, a. He spoke of another so there must have been an earlier one and that was Jesus himself and b. Counsellor is used here to translate a difficult word. We could use the word helper, comforter, or one who comes alongside, someone to be with them forever.

The whole is Jesus saying when I go away I'll ask the father to send you the Holy Spirit who will be with you in my place for ever.

Just note briefly the nature of the Holy Spirit as shown in these verses:

He is the Spirit of truth v17 as Jesus is the truth

Many will not accept him or know him, v17.

He will live in the Christian v17 bringing the presence of God into the life of the believer.

He is sent in Jesus' name v26

He will teach them and remind them of Jesus words v26.

Now I have skated over these things because as I look at the passage the main emphasis is not Jesus explaining the theology of the Holy Spirit but Jesus in love trying to calm the fears of his disciples by explaining that his going away is not the end of the world but rather the opening of a new chapter for them. We see this through the Bible as Moses departure makes way for Joshua, Elijah for Elisha. We see it in ordinary life, Mr Blair steps down and new opportunities are there for Gordon Brown, Schumacher retires and the way is open for Lewis Hamilton.

He wasn't going to leave them as orphans – that would not be loving and he loved them and so in love he was going to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to be with them.

6. 14:31 he showed what love is – he loved the Father and in love he obeyed what the Father commanded. Here, along with service and sacrifice, is a third mark of Jesus love and it is obedience. Here in v31 the obedience refers to the fact that his hour has come the devil was at work and Jesus' end was immanent. In loving obedience to the will of the Father he was ready to sacrifice his life in service of humanity.

Here is love shown by Jesus and epitomised by Jesus, love which has as its hallmarks service, sacrifice and obedience. "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."

In the light of this Jesus gave a clear call to his disciples, v15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

The call to obedience

In fact the call comes three times in these verses, in v15 and then again in vs 21 and 23.

This obedience is seen

firstly as a response of love.

We cannot and should not separate what Jesus here holds together that love results in obedience and obedience is the result of love.

He was saying to them that if their hearts were at one with him then obedience would be the result. Obedience is the response of love to Jesus, his love and his word. Over the next days they were to witness the terrible extent of the love of Christ. They would see his love taking him through the agony of the cross. Then as they met up with him again risen from the dead they would understand even more of his love shown in obedience service and sacrifice. Seeing that love would stir their hearts in a response of love so that Peter's brave claim in 13:37, "I will lay down my life for you", which so tragically came to grief at the first minor hurdle and ended in denial would now bring about a much clearer and stronger response of obedience in Peter's life such that eventually he would lay down his life for Jesus. "For Christ's love compels us," as Paul

put it (2 Cor 5:14).

It is a response of love. But

secondly it is a practical not sentimental response.

What commands did Jesus have in mind as he spoke to the disciples? Well I suppose we could say all the commands and we might narrow it down and say the royal command to love God with all heart soul mind and strength and neighbour as self. However when we look back to 13:34, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" and on to 15:12, "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." I get the impression this is what was in Jesus' mind as he spoke to his disciples. He had shown them what love is and if they loved him that same kind of love would be reflected in them. He's not talking about do this do that, he's talking about loving his way, in obedience but also in service and sacrifice.

What Jesus was expecting from his disciples was not that they would sing silly love songs but that they would take seriously his command to love in practical service and sacrifice.

Thirdly this obedience is divisive

in that it separates those who are Christ's followers from those who are not. We see that in vs 23-24 – if anyone loves me he will obey, he who does not love me will not obey. Jesus put it slightly differently in Matt 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." It is not those who say or sing to Jesus I love you who are truly his but those who follow his path and obey his will.

So how do these words resonate with us?

Are we obedient to Christ and his commands and especially to that command to love one another?

The nature of obedience to Jesus is that it says no to self and yes to Jesus. It allows him to be Lord as we submit in love to him. Again Jesus shows us what that means. We see it at the beginning and end of his ministry. At the beginning when he was tempted to turn stones in to bread for his own needs he refused – it was not the will of the father. At the end in the garden of Gethsemane in love he submitted to the will of the Father which took him to the cross.

Obedience is when we say to God not my will but yours, not me but you.

So let me ask again how does it work in our lives? Are we in love obedient to Jesus?

At home do things revolve around you and what you want? Jesus showed that love was about service – he came to serve not to be served.

I know that gone are the days when the husband came home and expected the little woman to have the meal on the table and then to wait on him but we still can in our home life be guilty of selfishness and have a self centred rather than serving attitude.

To obey Jesus' command will mean service and sacrifice.

I remember on my first weekend at theological college, after lunch on Sunday the Principal asked for volunteers to help with the washing up. I thought I'd go along and make a good impression. When I got there I found the Prin was already there with his coat off sleeves rolled up and up to his elbows in soapy water – and I don't think he was doing it for show!

Think about it at home are you in love obedient to Christ?

At work what is the motivating factor? Are you seeking to get on, to impress the boss, to make your mark, to get noticed and generally to improve your status or are you there working for the Lord seeking to serve Jesus and others through him. Is it about self or Christ because if we are obedient to Jesus at work then it will affect what we do and it may affect our prospects because being concerned for others rather than self, sometimes taking the back seat rather than being the pushy one, trying to do things in the right way rather than treading over people doesn't always get you ahead but surely it is being obedient to Christ isn't it? Take a moment to think about how you are at work and ask God am I being obedient to Jesus at work. If not then we need to ask his forgiveness and we need to hear his word and allow that word to change us. The call of Jesus is very clear "If you love me you will obey what I command." That friends works out not just in church but at work and at home as well.

Yes it should work out in church. Have you been to the cinema or theatre recently?

I went to the theatre on Friday. I got my ticket from the box office paid an extortionate amount for a programme sat down and enjoyed the show. Clapped at the end to show my appreciation of the efforts of those doing the show and walked out. Friends it is easy for us to treat church like that. I turn up when it suits me. I sit and watch the performance, sometimes I enjoy it more than others and then I go home. That it seems to me is a self centred attitude to church – I go for what I want and can get out of it. If this is the family of God then to obey Jesus will have an effect on the way we act. Just as I miss my son when he is away from home so I miss those who are not here on a Sunday. In a family there would have to be a good reason for us not sitting down and eating together. However, I feel that often we treat the main opportunity to be together with the family of God lightly. We let selfish reasons dictate whether we meet with our brothers and sisters in Christ or not.

But more than that we can also tend to treat it like a theatre where we come to be entertained rather than come to serve. Just as in the family at home it is not good if some allow the others to do all the work so at church it is not good. To be obedient to Christ involves service and sacrifice be it at home at work or at church – are you being obedient to Christ. There are plenty of opportunities to serve, welcoming, crèche, adventurers, pathfinders, music, PA, flowers, reading, prayers, songpro, coffee you name it we need people who are like cornflakes fresh crisp and ready to serve – ready to serve not to please me or to be seen but in response to the love of Jesus as we show our love for him in obeying what he commands. Its a part of obeying Jesus in love and our obedience being shown through service and sacrifice.

Jesus showed the full extent of his love – he held nothing back, his sacrifice was total and then called his disciples and through them calls us to a response of love shown in obedience to his command. "If you love me you will obey what I command".

The way of Jesus was the way of obedience and if we are to follow Jesus in every way it will be as we live our lives in obedience in humble submission to his word and will. "If you love me you will obey what I command".