

SO LOVED...SO LOVE

In the 2013 ISBC we will study primarily John's gospel, and in particular, Jesus' upper room discourse, his death and resurrection, as well as Jesus' vision. We pray to know the depth of God's love and to have a deep, intimate love relationship with God. Based on this love, we pray to have genuine love relationships with one another, and to serve the world with God's love.

Especially we want to think about the following key points:

- Chapter 13:1-38—Jesus demonstrates God's love for his selfish disciples in the midst of the devil's attack by humbly washing their feet. As he has loved us, he commands us to love one another in his community so that everyone may see the love of Jesus through them.
- Chapter 14:1-31—Jesus comforts his troubled disciples by giving them true hope in his Father's house and teaching them that he is the way to the Father: the only way of salvation; the truth: God himself; and the life: the giver of eternal life.
- Chapters 15:1-17—Jesus explains to his disciples how to live a fruit-bearing life in this world by remaining in him.
- Chapter 15:18-16:15—Jesus explains to his disciples that the world will hate and persecute them, and he promises that the Holy Spirit would help them carry out their mission. The Holy

Spirit testifies about Jesus, convicts the world about sin, righteousness and judgment, and guides disciples into all truth.

- Chapter 19:16-42—Jesus' last words from the cross were, "It is finished." This means that Jesus accomplished God's world salvation plan: becoming a substitutionary sacrifice for the atonement of our sins, and fulfilling the Scriptures. Jesus' death on the cross is the ultimate display of God's love for all people of the world.
- Chapter 20:1-31—The empty tomb, the testimony of eye witnesses, and especially Jesus' appearances prove that he rose from the dead. The Risen Christ dispels all the sorrows, fears and doubts of his followers and fills them with joy and peace and love. Jesus sends them into the world as joyful witnesses of the gospel of forgiveness and life.
- Chapter 4:35-38—After helping a thirsty Samaritan woman to receive him as the Messiah, Jesus encourages his disciples to open their eyes and see that the season of spiritual harvest has come. Jesus urges them to participate in his work as sowers and reapers and share the joy of a fruitful harvest together.

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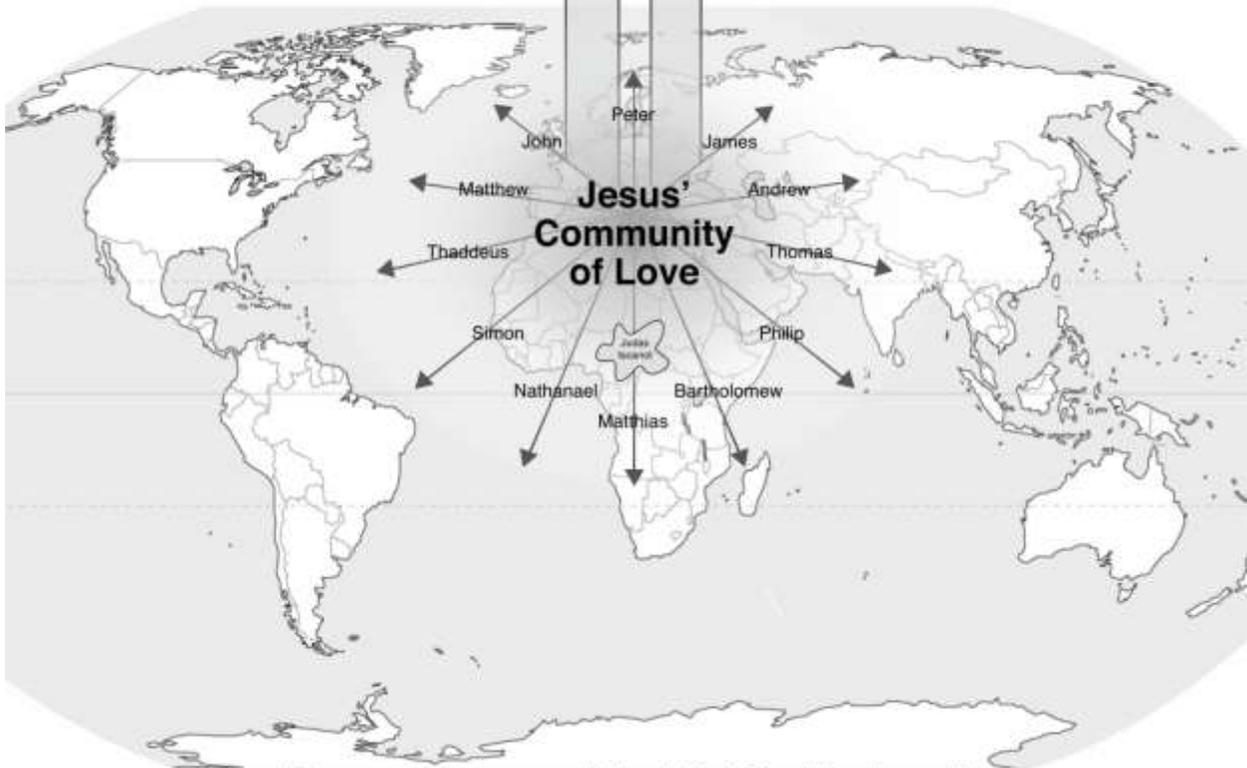
So-Loved

*"A new command I give you:
Love one another.
As I have loved you..."*
John 13:34a

So-Love

so you must love one another."
John 13:34b

*"As the Father has sent me,
I am sending you."*
John 20:21



Serve the world with God's love!

Chapter 13: “As I Have Loved You”

Background. Jesus came to the world to reveal God, and especially his love. In the beginning of Jesus’ messianic ministry, he formed a community of those who confessed him as the Messiah (1:41,45,49). Jesus wanted them to be characterized by love that serves. Jesus was about to leave this world, but they were not practicing love for one another. They were competitive, ambitious and indifferent to each other. In this chapter Jesus reveals the nature of God’s love and teaches them to love one another.

The full extent of Jesus’ love (1-5). Jesus loved his disciples to the end (1). His love is unchanging, unconditional, sacrificial and everlasting. Jesus was fully aware that he was the Son of God with divine authority and power over all things (2-3). But he did not exercise his power over his disciples. Rather, he demonstrated his love by washing their feet one by one (4-5).

The meaning of Jesus washing our feet (6-11). However, when it was Peter’s turn, he refused to be washed by Jesus (6). Jesus gently appealed to Peter to humbly accept Jesus’ washing, promising that he would understand later (7). Then Peter revealed his self-righteousness by strongly rejecting Jesus’ washing (8a). This would cut his relationship with Jesus first, and cause trouble in all of his relationships with other disciples, too. Jesus explained the necessity of this washing with strong words: “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me” (7-8). Peter really wanted to have a relationship with Jesus so he changed his attitude. He asked to have his hands and head washed, too (9). Jesus explained that those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet, because their whole body is clean (10). Here, “bath” refers to new birth

by the work of the Holy Spirit for those who have confessed Jesus as the Messiah (Jn 3:5; 6:68-69). Jesus' "washing one's feet" symbolizes cleansing our sins through his blood and his word (Jn 15:3; 1Jn 1:7). This refers to ongoing sanctification, which we need on a daily basis (Jn 17:17; Lk 11:4). In this way we can have an intimate love relationship with Jesus.

Follow Jesus' example (12-17). Jesus reminded them of who he is, their Teacher and Lord (13-14). Usually, teachers and Lords are honored and served by their students and subjects. Instead of being honored and served, Jesus humbly served his disciples. In this way Jesus set an example of humility and serving for them to follow (15-16). So they should wash one another's feet. Practically, this refers to forgiving one another and bearing one another's weaknesses, failures and mistakes with the mind of Jesus (Col 3:13). Jesus promised blessing when they practiced this (17). Since then, washing one another's feet with Jesus' humility has become a top Christian value. Jesus' example of humble serving has changed the world, and continues to do so through those who follow his example.

Jesus loved even Judas Iscariot to the end (18-32). In the midst of this beautiful event, Satan tried to destroy Jesus' community through Judas Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve (2,11,18,21-30). Judas' bad influence could have greatly damaged Jesus' community. Jesus dealt with Satan's attack seriously and wisely. Jesus foretold Judas' betrayal based on the Scripture to reveal that it was the will of God (18). In the midst of this seeming tragedy, Jesus planted faith that he is the Messiah (19-20). In his great agony, Jesus showed his love to the end even to Judas by offering a piece of his own bread as an intimate gesture of love (21-26). But Judas rejected Jesus' love to the end and went out

into the night (27-30). Through this event, Jesus was glorified as the Son of God (31). Jesus would be further glorified through his death on the cross and resurrection which glorifies God by showing God's love for the world (32).

Jesus' new command: "Love one another, as I have loved you" (33-38). After showing them his own example of love, Jesus gave his disciples a new command to love one another as he had loved them (33-34). It was not an option or advice, but Jesus' command, which implies obedience. It is a new command! Of course, the command to love was in the Old Testament: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18b). But Jesus' command is new because he loved in a way no one had ever loved or known before. Jesus' love enables us to love one another (1Jn 2:7-8; 4:19).

To love each other is the primary command Jesus gave the disciples, and he repeated it for emphasis (14:15,21; 15:10,12,14,17). In order to practice this quality of love for one another, we need to remember how much Jesus loved us and follow his example in loving others. In other words, Jesus becomes the center of these love relationships, and wants us to love one another, whether other people are lovely or not. Jesus wants his church to be a love community, so that through us the world might recognize Jesus and come to know God's love (35). Jesus bore Peter's weaknesses to the end (36-38).

Chapter 14: Jesus Is the Way

Jesus comforts his disciples to have faith and hope (1-4). Jesus had just told his disciples that he was going away and they could not follow him now (13:36). His disciples' hearts were troubled by anxiety, fear, hopelessness and confusion. They felt like orphans who were lonely

and without direction. Jesus comforted them by planting faith and trust in God, and in Jesus himself. Jesus also planted hope in the Father's house and taught them the way to the Father. He promised to come back and take them to be with him forever in the Father's house.

In verses 5-31, Jesus' disciples address him three times with questions or statements, and Jesus clearly answers them.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (5-7). The first question was "We don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" (5) Jesus answers, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (6). Jesus teaches us that our ultimate destination is the Father, and that he himself is the way to the Father, as well as the truth and the life. These days, like Jesus' disciples, many people wonder where they are going and how to get there. They are confused in the plethora of ideas spawned by relativistic pluralism. Jesus declares that he is the only way to the Father because he came from God and went back to God. Jesus is the only Mediator between God and us through his death for our sins and his resurrection from the dead. This is the truth and Jesus alone gives us eternal life.

Anyone who has seen Jesus has seen the Father (7-14). The second request was, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us" (8). Like Philip, many intellectual people want to see God with their eyes and touch him with their hands before they believe. They think this will satisfy them. They think that believing should be based on knowledge from the head, ignoring the heart. To them, believing without seeing seems to be foolish, unreasonable and unscientific like believing in fairy tales. They expect that some great miracles will happen to them in a dramatic, dynamic way. Jesus rebuked Philip in

order to plant faith in him, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (9) Then Jesus explained the basis for believing that Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Jesus. The first evidence is the words that Jesus had spoken (10). The second evidence is the works that Jesus had done (11). Jesus’ purpose in performing miraculous signs was to plant faith in his disciples that he is the Son of God (20:30-31). Then Jesus promised that whoever believes in him will do even greater things than Jesus did (12). These greater works can be done only by prayer in Jesus’ name (13-14).

Jesus promises to be with them through the Holy Spirit (15-21). Though Jesus would leave the world physically, he would not leave his disciples as orphans (18). As Jesus had been with his disciples, he promised that the Holy Spirit would be with them and in them (15-17a, 18). The Holy Spirit dwells in those who love and obey Jesus (15-16,21,23). However, the world could not accept the Holy Spirit (17b). Jesus called the Holy Spirit “another advocate” (16, the presence of Christ). When the Holy Spirit dwells within them they would know that Jesus is in the Father, they are in Jesus, and Jesus is in them (19-20). The Holy Spirit would bind them together as they obeyed Jesus’ commands (21). The one who loves Jesus will be loved by the Father and Jesus.

Jesus showed himself only to those who love him (22-24). The third question was, “Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” (22) Judas’ question suggests that he wanted Jesus to show himself to the world and become successful and famous. Then Judas could reap the benefits of this. But Judas did not understand the nature of the world. Here “the world” does not refer to

creation, or people in general, but to the realm under the devil's reign (30). This world is hostile toward God and Jesus. Just as light and darkness are incompatible opposites, so are God and the devil (1 Jn 2:15-16; 2 Cor 6:14-15). That is why Jesus did not show himself to the world. In his wisdom, God reveals himself only to those who love and obey him. The Father loves anyone who loves Jesus and obeys his teaching (23).

Jesus gives his disciples peace and promises victory (25-31). Jesus realized that his disciples did not fully understand his teaching. So he promised that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name to teach them all things, and to remind them of everything Jesus had taught them (25-26). Jesus gave his peace to his troubled disciples (27). Before he died on the cross, Jesus planted faith in them that all he did was done out of love for God, and was exactly what God the Father had commanded him to do. Jesus' death on the cross was not a failure but ultimate victory over Satan (28-31).

Chapter 15:1-16:15,33: Remain in Jesus

Part one: Remain in Jesus (15:1-17).

Jesus taught his disciples how to live a fruitful life (1-8). Jesus explained what kind of relationship his disciples would have with him after he left this world by using a vine and branch metaphor. The Father is the gardener, Jesus is the true vine, and the disciples are branches (1,5). They have an inseparable relationship. The Father's purpose for his disciples was to bear much fruit. Therefore, the Father cuts off fruitless branches, which refer to people who deliberately reject Jesus as the Messiah, like Judas Iscariot. The Father also prunes fruitful branches, which refers to divine discipline through his word for those

who have accepted Jesus as the Messiah, like Peter and the rest of the disciples, to make them even more fruitful (2-3). Jesus is the true vine, the source of life, who alone can make his disciples fruitful.

Bearing fruit is very important for Jesus' disciples. Everyone wants to live a fruitful life. The problem is how to bear fruit. Jesus said, "Remain in me, as I also remain in you" (4a). No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine (4b). In the same way, no one can bear fruit unless they remain in Jesus (4c). People try to bear fruit through their own hard work without Jesus. Instead of having a relationship with Jesus, they make good programs, build networks, or surf the web to find something. They should realize that they are just branches, which cannot bear fruit by themselves. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. If we do not remain in Jesus, we become like branches that are thrown away and wither, and are burned in the fire (6). Our spirits are drained and we become "burned out." So we feel lifeless, dry and useless. We have to realize that Jesus is the only source in bearing fruit. As we remain in Jesus, and Jesus remains in us, he bears fruit through us. Practically speaking, this refers to the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, as Jesus promised in 14:18. In the book of Acts, it is the Holy Spirit who enables the apostles to bear fruit. Let Jesus bear fruit through us!

In this passage, the words "remain in me" and "I remain in you" or their equivalent are repeated several times (4a,4b,5,6,7). This is union with Jesus through faith in him and commitment to him. When we remain in Jesus and his words remain in us, we can ask God for whatever we wish, and it will be done for us (7b). Jesus' words and prayer should go together for fruit bearing. When we bear much fruit, it reveals the Father's glory and we can show ourselves to be Jesus' disciples (8).

The fruit Jesus wants us to bear (9-17). Jesus loved his disciples as the Father has loved Jesus (9). His love for his disciples is divine; it is intimate, eternal, sacrificial, holding nothing back, and lacking nothing. Jesus' love is different than any love that we experience in this world, such as romantic love or filial love. The disciples had received Jesus' love and now they needed to remain in this love. The way of remaining in his love is to keep his commands (10). Keeping his commands is not burdensome; it is the way of experiencing the true joy that Jesus gives us (11). Jesus' command is: "Love each other as I have loved you" (12). Jesus explained how he loved us: It is love that lays down his life for his friends (13). Jesus demonstrated his love for his disciples so that his disciples would learn how to love one another. It was as friends, not in a hierarchy. Masters and servants have a hierarchical relationship based on duty. But Jesus' disciples are equals. So many conflicts have arisen in Christian history when this kind of love was not practiced. Instead of equals, people try to develop a hierarchy and impose a worldly power structure within the church. However, in Jesus' community, all members are equal as friends. We need to love one another as friends. The evidence of being his friends is obedience to his command to love one another (14). Jesus' friends enjoy a privilege of knowing the Father's business, which refers to God's world redemptive plan (15). We can participate in this plan willingly as Jesus' friends. We can serve the world with God's love. We need to remember that we did not choose Jesus, but Jesus chose us. If we think, "we chose Jesus," then bearing fruit would be our responsibility. But when we realize that Jesus chose us, bearing fruit is Jesus' responsibility. Jesus appointed us to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last, the fruit of eternal life (16;

4:36). All we have to do is to depend on Jesus and obey him. Jesus' command is to love each other (17). This is the fruit that Jesus wants.

Many people misunderstand the concept of fruit. They think it is limited to visible achievements. When they do not see this kind of fruit, they feel that they are a failure compared to others and fall into a sense of unworthiness and inadequacy. They are tempted to be competitive and fall into jealousy. We need to have a right concept of fruit. One fruit is love. Another fruit is joy (11). And another is peace (14:27). When we remain in Jesus we can have love, joy and peace (Gal 5:22). In brief it is to grow in Jesus' character and to be used in the work of saving lost souls.

Part 2: Jesus teaches the work of the Holy Spirit (15:18-16:15,33).

Jesus' disciples need to understand why the world hates them (15:18-25). Jesus was sending his disciples into the world (18a; 15:16; 17:11). Here, "the world" refers to that which is hostile to God because it is under the control of the devil (12:30; 14:30). Jesus testified that the works of "the world" are evil (7:7; 1 Jn 2:16). So the world hated Jesus (18b). When the disciples work in the world, they should not expect love and honor and recognition from the world. Rather, they can expect to be hated and persecuted. When these things happen, it is easy to be confused and to lose their identity. But they need to remember that the world hated Jesus first. We do not belong to the world, but to Jesus (19). For this reason, some people persecute them and others obey them; it is because of Jesus' name (20-21). Another reason the world hates Jesus is that he exposes its sin and guilt (22). Whoever hates Jesus hates God the Father as well (23-24). This hatred is irrational because of what Jesus had done (25).

The Holy Spirit helps Jesus' disciples (15:26-16:16,33). The "Advocate," *Paraklaytos* in Greek, is also called the "Counselor," "Helper," "Comforter," and "the Spirit of truth." Jesus sends him from the Father. The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus (15:26). The disciples also must testify about Jesus (15:27). Jesus warned of severe persecution that was coming. The disciples would be put out of the synagogue, which meant to be cast out of society. They would even be killed by people who thought they were serving God (16:2). Yet, they should not fall away (16:1). Rather, they should testify about Jesus (15:27). They should remember what Jesus said (4). Jesus had helped his disciples until this time. But now Jesus was going away (5). So they were filled with grief (6). But Jesus planted independent faith, which was not to depend on Jesus who was present physically, but on the Holy Spirit. So it was for their good that Jesus was going away (7a). Only by going away could Jesus send the Holy Spirit to them (7b). When the Holy Spirit comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment (8). The most serious sin is unbelief of Jesus (9). Another serious sin is self-righteousness. People's own righteousness is nothing but dirty rags. Jesus' righteousness truly makes one have a right relationship with God (10). Before Jesus came, Satan was holding people under the power of sin and death. But through his death and resurrection, Jesus destroyed Satan (Heb 2:14).

The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth and tells what is yet to come (13). The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus (14-15).

In this world we have many troubles, but Jesus encourages us, "Take heart! I have overcome the world!" We can be victorious because Jesus won the victory and the Holy Spirit is with us (33).

Chapter 19: "It Is Finished"

We all suffer from inner problems, such as guilt, shame, sorrow, failure, fear, anxiety, and broken relationships. Because of this we find it hard to love anyone, even ourselves. The root cause of these problems is our broken relationship with God, which is sin. We try to solve our sin problem in many ways, but our efforts are usually in vain. Jesus died on the cross to solve our sin problem. This happened according to the Scriptures, and it reveals God's great love for us. When we receive this love by accepting that Jesus died on our behalf, we can find the real solution to our inner problems. This enables us to love others and serve the world with God's love.

Jesus was crucified as King of the Jews (16-27). Pilate found no basis for a charge against Jesus (18:38; 19:4,6). Jesus was innocent. But Pilate surrendered to the pressure of the Jews and condemned Jesus to death and handed Jesus over to Roman soldiers to be crucified. Jesus carried his own heavy cross along what has come to be known as the "Via Dolorosa." It was the way of sorrow, pain, shame and tears. Jesus came to Golgotha, a gruesome place, outside the city, known as "the place of the Skull" (Heb 13:11-13) There he was to be publicly executed by crucifixion. Crucifixion was the most cruel, painful and shameful means of capital punishment in those days. Anyone who was hung on a cross was regarded as being under God's curse (Dt 21:23). Actually, Jesus bore the curse that we deserve (Gal 3:13). Jesus was crucified between two criminals (Isa 53:12). In this way, Jesus became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). Isaiah foretold that he would be despised and crushed, and the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all (Isa 53:3-6). To sum up, Jesus was tried, condemned and crucified in our places, for our sins.

Pilate placed a notice above the cross, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (19). From a human point of view, Jesus looked like a criminal, but from God’s point of view Jesus was the King of the Jews. This king was not a worldly ruler like many Jews expected (Jn 6:15; 18:36). He was mocked, spat upon, beaten, flogged, insulted and finally crucified. In fact, he was prophesied by God as a humble and victorious king (Zech 9:9; Jn 12:15). He was a spiritual king who defeated the devil (Gen 3:15; Heb 2:14-15). The sign above him was written in three international languages of the times, Aramaic, Latin and Greek. This means that Jesus is the Savior of the world (Jn 4:42).

The soldiers sat beneath the cross and divided up Jesus’ clothes. It looked like the Roman Empire and evil Jewish leaders were in charge to carry out their plan, and evil was running amok. But this happened so that the Scripture might be fulfilled (24). In fact, the Sovereign God was in control to accomplish his salvation plan. Jesus’ mother Mary, her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene and John were witnesses of Jesus’ crucifixion and death. Jesus showed his compassionate humanity in the midst of his agony by entrusting his mother to John, and John to his mother (25-27).

Jesus’ last words, “It is finished” (28-42). Though Jesus was in extreme anguish on the cross, his main concern was not about himself, but about fulfilling Scripture concerning the Messiah. Jesus realized that there was one more thing to fulfill. So he said, “I am thirsty” (Ps 69:21). In this way Jesus revealed his absolute and willing obedience to God the Father to fulfill his salvation plan. After Jesus had received the wine vinegar, he said, “It is finished.” With that he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (30).

“It is finished,” means that God’s work to provide the perfect sacrifice for sins was fulfilled by Jesus’ death on the cross. Jesus broke his body and shed his blood on the cross for our sins. Jesus became the

substitutionary sacrifice, the Lamb of God, without blemish or defect who was offered once for all (Heb 10:10). Jesus paid the full price for our sins. Man's sin problem was completely solved by Jesus' sacrifice. God does not require anything from us for our salvation except to believe what he has done in and through Jesus. There is no condemnation or guilt for those who are in Christ Jesus (Ro 8:1). The power of sin is broken and we can live a new life. Our fellowship with God is restored; this is eternal life (Jn 17:3). We can have daily victory over our sins and the temptations of the devil.

"It is finished" is a perfect passive verb tense in Greek. This means that the one-time event of Jesus' death on the cross completely paid our debt of sin once for all, and its effectiveness continues right up to the present time, throughout our lifetimes, and into the future, until Jesus' Second Coming. Whenever we come to Jesus and confess our sins, Jesus is faithful and just and forgives us our sins and his blood purifies us from all sin and unrighteousness (1 Jn 1:7,9). Jesus' death on the cross was the greatest act of love that God has carried out for us (Jn 3:16).

After saying, "It is finished," Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit (30b). Jesus died willingly, giving his life; it was not taken from him (Jn 10:18). Soldiers came to confirm that Jesus had died. Seeing that he was already dead, they did not break his bones. Instead, they pierced his side with a spear. In this way they fulfilled Scripture (36-37; Ps 34:20; Zech 12:10; Isa 53:5). Jesus was buried—he really, actually died and was buried (38-42). Chapter 20: "I Am Sending You"

People are suffering from sorrows, fears and doubts. At the root, these all stem from the power of death, which has ruled people's lives. Jesus rose from the dead according to the Scriptures, conquering the power of death. The Risen Christ dispels the sorrows, fears and doubts

of his followers and fills us with joy, peace and love. Jesus sends us into the world as witnesses of the gospel of forgiveness and life. As God so loved the world and sent Jesus, so Jesus also sends his disciples into the world to serve the world with God's love.

"I have seen the Lord!" (1-18). First, John presents the empty tomb as the first evidence of Jesus' resurrection (1-10). These verses are the eye-witness accounts of Mary, Peter and John. Mary found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb and reported this to Jesus' disciples. John the author records vivid details: the race to the tomb which contrasted Peter's courage and John's caution, the missing body, and the burial cloth and the strips of linen (7). This tells us that Jesus' body was not stolen, and it was not unwrapped, but it simply vanished out of the cloths, leaving them where they were. John saw and believed the facts, though he did not understand from the Scriptures that Jesus had to rise from the dead (8). We should believe in Jesus' resurrection based on the Scriptures, as well as the facts. To this day, the empty tomb testifies that Jesus rose from the dead.

Second, the Risen Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (11-18). Mary was overwhelmed with sorrow due to Jesus' death and her assumption that Jesus' body had been stolen and she did not know where it was. She was crying and crying. The root cause of her sorrow was the power of death. Christian life without encountering the Risen Christ is sorrowful, for we feel so weak, pitiful and meaningless (1 Cor 15:19). Mary saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus' body had been. They asked her, "Why are you crying?" suggesting that she did not need to. But it did not help her. She was still looking for Jesus' dead body. Even though

she saw Jesus standing there she did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus is standing right beside us, knocking on the door of our hearts (Rev 3:20). But we are not aware of this and remain in our sorrows.

To help her overcome sorrow, the Risen Jesus asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Jesus, the one she was looking for, was standing right there talking with her. However, she did not recognize him. In Mary’s deep thought world, no one could conquer the power of death, not even Jesus. It was beyond her imagination that Jesus would rise again. Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Tell me where you have put him and I will get him.” Jesus called her by name, “Mary” (16a). It was the voice of her good shepherd (Jn 10:3,14). When she heard Jesus’ voice personally call her by name, her spiritual eyes were opened and she saw that Jesus was right there with her, and he was the same Jesus (16b; Heb 13:8). He had risen! He had conquered death!

Mary was so happy that she tried to hold on to Jesus with all her strength. She never wanted to let go of him again. But Jesus stopped her from holding on to his body (17a). He taught that he would ascend to the Father. She needed to begin a new relationship with Jesus. It would not be limited to the human and emotional level, but would be spiritual by faith. Then Jesus gave her the mission to go and tell the good news to his disciples (17b). In his message, Jesus called the disciples “my brothers” and he calls the Father, “My Father and your Father...my God and your God” (17c). Until that time, no one could personally call God “Father” without being accused of blasphemy (Jn 5:18). But through faith in Jesus who died for our sins and rose again,

the relationship between God and people is revolutionized. Now we can have a most intimate love relationship with God in which we call God “Father.” We have become the family of God who inherit God’s kingdom. We can form a beautiful brotherhood in Jesus, as the family of our Father God, with the glorious hope of the resurrection.

After encountering Risen Jesus, sorrowful Mary became a joyful witness. She went to the disciples with the news, “I have seen the Lord!” (18a) And she told them that Jesus had said these things to her (18b). In this part we learn that Jesus was truly raised from the dead. Encountering the Risen Jesus personally and living as his witnesses is the solution to all the sorrows that come from the power of death.

“As the Father has sent me” (19-31). First, the Risen Jesus appears to his fearful disciples (19-23). That evening, the disciples were gathered together. They locked the doors because they were afraid that the evil people who killed Jesus would attack them next (19a). The fear of death totally distressed and paralyzed them. Fear comes when our relationship with God is broken (Gen 3:10). The devil, who holds the power of death, enslaved and tormented them (Heb 2:14-15). They could not break free from the grip of fear. They needed deliverance.

The Risen Jesus came through the locked doors, stood among them and said, “Peace be with you” (19b). Jesus, through his death and resurrection, restores our relationship with God and gives us peace (Ro 5:1). We can have an intimate love relationship with God, calling him “Abba, Father” (Ro 8:15-16). God’s love drives out fear (1 Jn 4:18). To prove that it was really him, the Risen Jesus showed the evidence of his

wounds. The disciples were overjoyed (20). Their fear turned to joy when they saw the Lord. Only the Risen Jesus could save them from their fear and give them peace and joy. We, too, become fearful living in the world where suffering and death are real, and the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Pe 5:8). But the Risen Jesus gives us peace that passes understanding, and guards our hearts and minds, and enables us to live as God's children (Php 4:7).

Again Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you" (21a). With this peace, Jesus sends them into the world. Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (21b). God took initiative to send Jesus into the world. God sacrificed his one and only Son for the world and raised him from the dead. God's motive was love (Jn 3:16). God's purpose was to save people from sin and death, and make them his children, and give them eternal life. Jesus obeyed the Father out of love and completed the work of salvation. As the Father had sent him, Jesus sent his disciples into the world. This would require following Jesus' example of initiative, sacrifice, love and obedience. Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit to be with them. Then he entrusted them with the task of proclaiming the gospel of forgiveness to the people of the world. Those who believe their message would receive forgiveness. Those who did not receive their message would not receive forgiveness. In this way Jesus taught his disciples the importance and necessity of proclaiming the gospel of forgiveness of sins.

Second, stop doubting and believe (24-31). When the Risen Jesus appeared the first time, Thomas was not with the other disciples (24). They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" (25a) But Thomas did not

believe them. He said, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe” (25b). To Thomas, the testimony of witnesses was not enough. He wanted evidence that he could see and touch personally. Jesus understood Thomas and visited him personally. Jesus said, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe” (27). Thomas accepted Jesus’ words and confessed, “My Lord and my God!” (28) Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (29).

In verse 31 John says, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” Jesus wants us to believe based on what is written. Jesus sent his disciples into the world to love the people of the world as the Father had sent him. Jesus wanted them to serve the world with God’s love. This is the meaning of “So loved...so love.” Jesus sent them in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel of forgiveness of sins so that everyone who believes might have life in his name. This is John’s version of the world mission command, but heavily emphasizing love, more than any other gospel.