

John 13-17—these 5 chapters tell of Jesus last words to his disciples before he leaves them

Time when he tells them he is leaving and they can't follow

But he has numerous other messages to convey to them

This time is bookended by the Last Supper in the upper room and the Garden of Gethsemane

*John 13:1—Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. **Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.***

A fitting beginning to these 5 chapters which are filled with love—both as fact and as a message

Jesus loved them deeply—these 12 men that he had spent days with, walking around Israel

They had lived intimate, close knit lives, sharing food, caring for each other, etc.

Like the crowds, they heard Jesus' teachings and saw the miracles—also had private talks

They had learned so much in these few short years that they spent together

Jesus also loved the other men and women that followed along with them as followers of Jesus

This band of followers had grown close and loved being able to follow and serve Jesus

It is this group of people that have given everything to do the work Jesus calls them to do

Jesus knows he is leaving, but he wants them to understand what is on his heart

He knows they will struggle and even panic at times

He also knows they will be all right and that they can carry on with his work

But he wants to leave them with a message that they can remember when it's hard

The first and primary message is to love one another

He begins at the meal together by a powerful demonstration of love

Twice women had washed his feet and were criticized for doing it

But Jesus said no and received this gift of love

Now he takes the place of a servant and washes the feet of the disciples—an act of love  
Inviting them to do the same thing for each other

Then he gives them a **new** commandment...

*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35 NRSV*

It is a radical thing to organize around love

I think we hear it as ho-hum—of course we should all get along and love everyone

But to make that the most important thing—this way of being is to love—is huge

Truthfully, the church today struggles to do this

We too easily jump to other things, including judgment

Interestingly—Jesus doesn't just say that they should love each other

He carries it further, saying—this is how people will know you follow me

Love is how we will be recognized

Yet the world at large struggles to see love in the church of today

Love must be our first/last/only motion and we must not stray from this radical message

Jesus tells them that they must continue to live Jesus' way—following him and doing life his way

They are to do the things he taught them—beginning with this commandment to love

Jesus declares that he and the Father are one—you see Jesus—you see God—you see God—you see Jesus

Then he tells them that his Spirit will come when he leaves—my Spirit will dwell with you

Jesus says this Spirit will remind you of me—because the Spirit is the same as God and me

With the Spirit, you will do even greater things than Jesus—his power is released in the Spirit

Jesus returns to this theme of love—*"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"* John 14:15

Jesus uses the metaphor of a grape vine—calling us to abide in him and stay connected to the vine

To accept the pruning that God does in our lives, just as the vine grower prunes the vines

It is for our health and growth that we allow this pruning

As branches in this vine—we are to bear fruit—natural result of being part of the vineyard

Fruit—what is this fruit? Is it to produce "baby Christians"?

I don't think so—Jesus talks about this natural fruit that grows—love and joy!

*As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. John 15:9-11 NRSV*

That list is later expanded by Paul in his talk about fruits of the Spirit  
Galatians 5:22-23—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity...

Then comes the passage from which Friends took their name as *Friends of Jesus*

*"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."* John 15:12-17 NRSV

It begins and ends with love!

The commandment we are to follow is love

I object to just using verse 14 as the source of our name

*You are my friends if you do what I command you.*

I heard it as an obedience verse that left me with a big IF

I am only Jesus' friend IF I am obedient

Rather it is all about Jesus' love for us and our call to love one another

It also speaks of the Quaker knowing that Jesus continues to speak to us

Jesus lets us in on everything that God is doing

We were chosen—chosen to bear fruit, which is this fruit of love and joy!

Jesus warns us that it won't always go well for us—the world hates Jesus and it will hate you too

We shouldn't be surprised that we will face struggles and that we will find resistance

We've been chosen and live in this alternate Kingdom of God

Jesus reminds them that the Spirit will be with them and will tell them what they need to know

The Spirit will remind them of Jesus' teachings and help them through the hard places

The Spirit will tell you what you need to know at the time you need it

The Spirit is not different than either the Father or Jesus—they are all One

In Jesus' leaving, they will be sad and mourn

But the pain will turn to joy as they will see Jesus again

Life will continue—their work will continue

Ask of the Father in my name and he will give you what you ask for

But soon you will all scatter and leave me alone—but I'm not alone—the Father is with me

You will face persecution—but take courage—I have conquered the world

Then Jesus slips into prayer—because for him, this is as easy as talking

The time has come—I've made you known to these friends of ours—protect them

I want them to have my joy

Protect them from the evil one

You and I are One—may they be one with us

*As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. John 17:18 NRSV*

Jesus sends us out in the same way that he was sent to us

We carry on with Jesus' work—generation after generation

*"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. John 17:20-21 NRSV*

We are all included—this prayer and these teachings apply to all followers of Jesus

The word "believe" that is used here does not speak of belief in doctrine

Rather, it means "to adhere to, trust, rely on"

All those who trust Jesus throughout history are included

*I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:23 NRSV*

Jesus prays for our unity as followers of Jesus

That this is how the world will recognize God—in our unity

How can we do that without love

Finally, Jesus ends his prayer with love...

*I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." John 17:26 NRSV*

In this passage, 20 verses speak of love...

*John 13:1 - Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

*John 13:23 - One of his disciples--the one whom Jesus loved--was reclining next to him;*

*John 13:34 - I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*

*John 13:35 - By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

*John 14:15 - "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*

*John 14:21 - They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."*

*John 14:23 - Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.*

*John 14:24 - Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.*

*John 14:28 - You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.*

*John 14:31 - but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.*

*John 15:9 - As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.*

*John 15:10 - If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*

*John 15:12 - "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*

*John 15:13 - No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.*

*John 15:17 - I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.*

*John 15:19 - If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world--therefore the world hates you.*

*John 16:27 - for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.*

*John 17:23 - I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

*John 17:24 - Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

*John 17:26 - I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."*