

4-1-07 – Palm Sunday – 10 AM
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

The Commitment Question
“Will you lay down your life for Me?”
John 13:31-38

We are continuing our Lenten series – **Questions for Lent**. Today we will look at the Commitment Question and this follows closely with what PJ spoke to us about last week. There are 20 questions that Jesus asks His disciples in John’s gospel. We have chosen some of those questions to carry us through the Lenten season. Lent is a time to prepare us for the main event – Easter – the Resurrection Celebration that is Christianity. Our objective is to give you some things to think about so you might commit yourself more fully to Jesus Christ, because of Who He is and because of what He committed Himself to for all of us. As we continue in John’s gospel, we will be looking at chapter 13:31-38.

Last week PJ gave us a definition of a disciple. He said,
“A disciple is one who has a passionate love for the person of Jesus Christ, full confidence in the Word of Christ, and is completely committed to Christ in service and obedience.”

He ended his sermon with these words:

“Jesus demands your full devotion, because of Who He is. He alone can give eternal life. Commit yourself to Him today.”

A woman's husband had been slipping in and out of a coma for several months, yet she had stayed by his bedside every single day. One day, when he came to, he motioned for her to come nearer.

As she sat by him, he whispered, eyes full of tears, "You know what?

You have been with me all through the bad times.

When I got fired, you were there to support me.

When my business failed, you were there.

When I got shot, you were by my side.

When we lost the house, you stayed right here.

When my health started failing, you were still by my side... You know what?"

"What dear?" she gently asked, smiling as her heart began to fill with warmth.

"I think you are bad luck!"

What is commitment? Here’s a definition of sorts ...

Commitment, n.:

Commitment can be best illustrated by a breakfast of ham and eggs. The chicken was involved, the pig was committed.

Let's look at The Commitment Question ... **READ JOHN 13:31-38**

As with most sections of Scripture, just like in any literary work, we have know what's going on in the overall scene, not just the text for today alone.

If we look back a little, from chapter twelve we see that Jesus made, what is known as His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. Throngs of people crowded around in support shouting Hosanna to the King. They are committed followers – aren't they? Then Jesus turns His attention to the people to explain that the time has come for Him to depart and die. Jesus must be lifted up by death in order to be glorified. A few days later Jesus celebrates his last Passover with the twelve. The teaching continues as He shows them how they are to serve each other. He gets down and washes their filthy feet as an example. Judas leaves the scene to go and betray Jesus. The master – the teacher – is alone with the eleven for the last of His teachings and instructions to these men.

An O.T. tradition is for a recognized teacher to call his disciples/students – “my children” and they would commonly call their teacher – “my father.” John called the audience of his epistles – “children,” and he is also writing here with that same mentality. We see this of Elijah as teacher and Elisha as disciple ...

2 Kings 2:11-12 - *As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more.*

It was also tradition in this teaching context that when a famous teacher was about to depart or die, they would give a very important final teaching to their “students.” The time had come and Jesus was leaving them. It was only natural for Him to give His final important instructions to His closest followers, even if they didn't fully get it yet. This entire section of John's gospel is related to Jesus' betrayal and imminent death.

The Jesus-God Commitment –

Jesus uses the term Son of Man in our text (v. 31)

Son of Man – was a favorite expression or title that Jesus used to refer to Himself. It is used twelve times in John's gospel and our text contains the last occurrence in this gospel. The title is powerful and is the title of the incarnate Christ. ***He is the representative of humanity before Almighty God and the representative of deity in human life.***

As we read verses **31-32** we are overwhelmed with the term “**glorify.**” It is used five times in these two verses. As Jesus' last teaching discourse with the disciples, He would not be wasting time and words, so this repetition is important. Jesus is not referring to him being exalted, and he's not talking about end times stuff here. Jesus is referring to His death. God had a plan in Christ, and Jesus was committed to fulfilling that plan. **The Cross would become the supreme glory of God because of Jesus' obedience and commitment to the Father.** It is not just the Cross and His death that is at work here.

The glory comes in that Jesus is resurrected. This is all part of a single redemptive work. There is an element of exaltation because Jesus is resurrected and now seated in Glory. So **the resurrection** that we will celebrate next week **is the fulfillment of Jesus commitment to the Father's plan** – the very reason that He came to us as Son of Man.

Jesus was not only willing to lay down His life for humanity, but He actually went to the Cross and died for us all. This was and always is the extreme example of Commitment. He was trying to tell his disciples about the importance of His mission. He had to leave; he had to die; he had to follow through on the commitment he made to the Father. His commitment was so strong that he would die for it. But they just didn't get it. So He takes a different approach so they might understand...

The One-Another Commitment –

He begins to speak of love – in endearing terms. **“My Children”** – an address that shows His concern and devotion to the eleven. The teacher is addressing his disciples formally. They become attentive to his next words – so what does He say to them... He again tries to tell them that he must go away (die). He told the Jews and they didn't get it. Now he's telling his closest companions with a teaching directive – and they don't get it either. **Where He is going they cannot come.** They weren't ready to follow Him in this way **YET**, but they all would some day down the road.

He captures their attention by saying that he is giving them a **New Commandment**. What? They have existed for centuries with the commandments of Moses and the Law. What kind of new commandment, Jesus? They must have been riveted on him now. **“Love one another.”** What's so new about that? These men knew the Law. They have heard Jesus teach for three years. Love God as commanded in the Shema from Deut. 6:5, and **“love your neighbor as yourself”** – from Leviticus 19:18. They recited it every morning and evening. There's nothing new about this teaching.

Here's the twist. Jesus didn't say to love one another as they love themselves. He said **“love one another as I have loved you.”** What's the difference? What is he trying to get them to understand? Why is this commandment new when it's so old? What has Jesus added that makes everything different? This was the heart of His most important teaching? Love one another? That's it? YES! But, there's a newness about it – a freshness – as indicated by the Greek tenses and words.

Their motive for following Him could not be just to obtain some higher ranking in the Kingdom of God. He had work for them to do that would demand every ounce of fiber in their being to accomplish. In order for this to be successful, there had to be **a genuine attitude of love as the bond that would keep them united.** They had to show the world around them that they had partaken of His spirit and purpose. He loved them without reservation and without limit. They had to do the same. We have to do the same.

This goes beyond knowledge. We can know we have to do something, but then we have to do it. It was and is this ingredient that ***“by this all people will know that we are His disciples – if we love one another.”*** The world is a big place. I’m not just talking about loving those we see on either side of us. What about the other cultures out there? Jesus is the redeemer of ALL humanity. We need to open our eyes wider. We may need to learn about others in order to help them and love them so they can find the Savior. We may have to commit to loving one another as Jesus teaches us to do.

The Commitment Question –

Like PJ said last week – you gotta love Peter. He’s up front and sometimes puts his foot into his mouth, but he asks and speaks from his heart. You can almost see the question marks on Peter’s forehead. I’m listening to You Lord, but I don’t what you are talking about. Where are you going? We’re all here safe and sound – with you. You are our teacher and friend. We love you and have learned so much from You. You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God who has come into the world. What could possibly happen that you can’t fix?

Jesus knows they don’t have a clue. His heart must be burdened for them. He tells them they will indeed follow him, but they’re not ready yet. Then Peter – of course – personalizes things as usual. He doesn’t care what the others think or agree to. He sets the story straight...

John 13:37 - *“Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”*

Jesus pounces on the opportunity at this point. He is trying to teach them something and all attempts have failed so far. He drops the Commitment Question on them all:

“Will you lay down your life for me?” He speaks in the plural sense here saying this to them all – “you all.”

Then he personalizes things for Peter a bit... **Yo – Ceph – Pete – (or maybe – Oi – Peter, Peter, Peter) – You think you are committed, but I’m telling you Bro – you have a ways to go before you really understand commitment. This is gonna cost you, man. Big time! I mean, like your very life. Are you really ready for this?**

Peter was sure that he would follow Jesus to the death, and he does not understand that death is exactly where Jesus was going. He tells Peter that even though he really believes he is committed to Jesus, the fact is that at this point, when push comes to shove, Peter will deny even knowing Jesus within a few short hours from this scene. (Explain the cock crowing once or twice timing thing). The point is that Peter’s denial will occur almost immediately after he vowed to die for Jesus – and he was there with Jesus in person on a daily basis. He saw the miracles. He heard the teachings first hand. He recognized Jesus for who he really is. Peter’s love for Jesus was undeniably genuine, but was he really totally committed? I’m sure Peter couldn’t believe Jesus said such a thing. I’m sure he couldn’t imagine such a personal failure could happen.

Jesus knew Peter's weaknesses. He knows our weaknesses too. We all have weaknesses even if we don't realize it. How committed do you think you are to Jesus? How committed are you really? When Peter denied the Lord, he was blindsided by the confrontation. We may be confronted about our faith in Christ when we least expect it. Peter stumbled. Don't think it can't happen to you. How faithful will we be under fire?

My denial story in Washington ...

"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" 1 Cor. 10:12

We have been doing an extensive verse by verse study through the Revelation. While this is a book of hope for the church of Jesus Christ, it also contains some serious warnings about our faithfulness and our commitment to Jesus. While there was persecution of the church in the first century, there is now in some areas and will be persecution of the church until the end of history. As God's judgment against sin intensifies, so will the persecution. We are mostly insulated here in the US, but that will not last forever. Listen to the words of John from Revelation.

Rev 6:9-11 -

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

People out there are still giving their lives for their faith in Christ. The Word of God says this will continue until the appointed time for the end to come. Have you ever considered what you would do if you were given the choice to deny Christ or die? Do you remember that young girl in Columbine High School when the gunman asked her if she believed and shot her dead when she said YES? She was totally committed to Christ.

Jesus asked Peter the Commitment Question that He is asking of each of us today too.

"Will you lay down your life for Me?"

Today – Palm Sunday – will you shout Hosanna to the King and then go back to life as usual? Or – will you commit your entire being to Jesus today and be faithful to the end?

"Jesus demands your full devotion, because of who He is. He alone can give you eternal life. Commit yourself to Him today."