

John 13:1-35

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Date: 07 May 2023

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[0 : 00] All right, as a little bit of an intro, in prepping for the sermon, I began to think a little bit and realize that there are probably a number of people here who actually don't really know who I am.

So for anybody in that boat, my name is Caleb Waters. I've been here at CFC since fall of 2012. I ended up here just as like a large chunk of us have of initially connecting through college Bible study while studying at what that time was in GCSU.

I met my wife at the new members class here, and we both got education degrees from UNG. Both of us got jobs in Forsyth County. We lived in a camper in Cleveland for a while right when we got married and we bought a house in Dahlonega.

Now we have a couple of boys, Everett, who is almost two, and Isaac, who is almost three months old. I served as an elder here from really, really, really early 2020 until last summer when I stepped down so that, as Nathan mentioned earlier, we could prep for the move.

We're turning our house up here into an Airbnb. I had to find a new teaching job down there, that kind of thing. Some of you who knew the details of that have started to ask us, like, has the plan changed?

[1 : 19] Like, are y'all actually still moving? Y'all are still here? And it's really just that we are super planners, and so the move is finally here, about three and a half weeks away, I guess. But it feels like we're moving home, but moving away from home.

This church has been our family for the last over ten years now. We love you guys, and it's really, really hard to leave. And anyway, I just wanted to say all of that for anybody who might have gotten here in the last year or so, and I feel like I haven't been in the stage as much in that last little bit.

All right, let's get to the word this morning. Nathan told me I could preach anything that I wanted to, and that sometimes is a really hard thing to then narrow down.

But as I reflected just back along my time at CFC, I couldn't get away from one idea, and so that's what we're going to focus on this morning. So y'all turn with me to John 13.

John 13. Alex Kohler read a chunk of this text last Sunday in the Lord's Supper service, and I hope because of that the context will feel familiar to some of us.

[2 : 33] I do want to read a very large chunk of this chapter, but don't be afraid. We are not going to dig into every single part of it. I really just want to focus on two verses, but I think the context is so important that we should read a lot of it.

And those verses that we'll particularly be focusing on are verses 34 and 35. All right. Let's go ahead and read John chapter 13, starting all the way in verse 1.

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

[3 : 41] He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand. Peter said to him, You shall never wash my feet.

Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no share with me. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

Jesus said to him, The one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you. For he knew who was to betray him. That was why he said, Not all of you are clean. When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.

If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you.

[4 : 42] Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

I am not speaking of all of you. I know whom I have chosen, but the scripture will be fulfilled. He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me. I am telling you this now before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am he.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send, receives me, and whoever receives me, receives the one who sent me. After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit and testified, truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.

The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side. So Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.

So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, it is he whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it. So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

[5 : 51] Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, what you are going to do, do quickly. Now, no one at the table knew why he said this to him.

Some thought that because Jesus had the money bag, Jesus was telling him, buy what we need for the feast or that he should give something to the poor. So after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out and it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, now is the son of man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and glorify him at once.

Little children, yet a little while I am with you. He will seek me and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I am going, you cannot come. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. All right. That's our text for this morning. I know that it's heavy and intense.

[7 : 03] All right, that's where we're at. So let's talk about the context first for a little bit and then we'll get into the main part of the sermon. So something that's really important to note at the beginning of this passage is that very early in it, we see that this is recorded at a time when Jesus knows that his time is coming short.

It's become clear to him that he doesn't have much time left in this world, that he'll soon be sold to authorities, he'll ultimately be condemned and put to death and then be raised. And I think it's important to note John specifically pointing this out here in verse one, that Jesus, even as he knew his time was coming soon to be put to death, that he didn't try to hide out.

He didn't keep to himself all the time, but what does it say? He loved his disciples to the very end. Jesus did not choose to make a decision that would bring comfort or safety in his last little bit of time here on this earth, but instead he chose to love his disciples, those who were with him to the very end.

And so that's our context here. He's having a meal with his disciples. He decides to wash their feet. And it becomes very clear that this washing of feet is very significant, both in the minds of the disciples and in Jesus' mind.

And so a couple ways we can see that. Firstly, we see some insight to what the disciples are thinking, how they are reacting to this whole scenario. And as is very often typical in the Gospels, we see exactly what Peter had to say about it.

[8 : 37] And so let's read verse 5 through verse 11 one more time. It says, Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, What I'm doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand. Peter said to him, You shall never wash my feet.

Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no share with me. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus said to him, The one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean.

And you are clean, but not every one of you, for he knew who was to betray him. That was why he said, Not all of you are clean. So Jesus is going around watching the disciples' feet and Peter speaks up.

He's clearly embarrassed, maybe a bit ashamed that his teacher, the one he's followed for so long, the one who he has begun to understand and will soon fully understand that is the very Son of God. [9 : 44] He's ashamed that our Lord Jesus is washing his feet. And so he starts saying, Lord, you're never going to wash my feet. And he seems a little bit taken aback, maybe startled slightly by what the Lord's response is.

That he will not have any share with him if he is not washed. And Peter's thoughts change. We can see that clear change there. He says, Wash all of me, of course, I want to share with you. Peter didn't fully understand here.

Peter didn't get that the Lord was using this as a picture of his blood that was going to be shed on their behalf. Sure, he was starting to catch on. He was getting there, but he didn't quite get that full picture yet.

And the Lord says this to Peter and to all of the disciples here. You don't quite get this now, but afterwards, speaking there of his death, his resurrection, you will understand it. And so, after Peter's response, we hear some more from the Lord.

Let's look at 12 through 17 again. We're going to be saturated in the scripture. Let's not be afraid of it. When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, Do you understand what I have done to you?

[10 : 52] You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

And so, we get a little bit more perspective of what this foot washing is all about. It was to be a picture to the disciples that they clearly saw that this was like a lowly, gross maybe, task, task, and yet their teacher and Lord, he is partaking in it for them.

And Jesus makes the argument then that is a similar argument to what we'll see in our main couple of verses that we'll be focusing on, that as they see their teacher and their Lord partaking in the lowliest of service, that they should too.

They should serve one another. They should follow the example of their teacher and their Lord. The Lord reminds them that a servant should not expect to do things differently than their master. If anything, he should expect to have to do harder work.

[12 : 03] And when they see their teacher partaking in the service, they should be eager to do the same thing. Now, after these verses, we see lots about Jesus' betrayal.

We'll talk about that a little bit, but for now, with our context set up, let's get to verses 33 to 35.

Remember that we see that Jesus knew that his time was coming soon.

Then we saw him saying the disciples would understand an idea more fully afterward, speaking of after his death, his resurrection. And then in verse 33, that will become even more clear.

So, let's read 33 to 35 one more time. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I am going, you cannot come.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

[13 : 10] And so Jesus, again, so many times in this passage, he has pointed out that he's not going to be with them much longer. And pretty interestingly, he gives them this new command right after that statement.

It's almost as if he's saying, when I'm gone, be ready to do this work. He commands him to follow this in his physical absence. And with that in mind, let's actually give some structure to the rest of the sermon.

I think I gave a lot of intro this morning. There's going to be five points, and here they are. The first one will be the command itself. The command itself.

The second one will be the newness of the command. The newness of the command. Third, the impossibility and possibility of the command.

Four, some examples of the command. And number five, are we following the command? So let's get into it. So let's talk about the command itself.

[14:12] So it's actually pretty simple to understand. Verse 34 just says, we are to love one another, and then it clarifies how are we to love one another? We are to love one another with the very same love that Christ has loved us with.

And if that amount of love is not startling to us, it should be. We should remember some context yet again here. Verse 33, little children, yet a little while I am with you, you will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I'm going, you can't come.

Let's remind each other that all the way up to that, John is making it very clear that Jesus knows that his time is coming soon. And so with that context in mind, that amplifies this.

Because what is coming? Where is he going? Our Lord knows that he's about to die. He knows that he's about to be wrongfully accused and tried, be put to death. But he also knows something else, that his death will atone for the sins of all those who will trust in him.

He knows that these disciples are included in that. We saw him referencing that very clearly right before these verses. So it's something I think we all understand.

[15:31] We all know it. But let's track with that logic just to make sure we're all on the same page with what is being talked about here. If we are called to love as he has loved the disciples and us for that matter.

And with the context here, we can begin to clearly see that he's speaking of his death for the disciples and for us. And so with that, what is our calling?

We're called to give up our very life for one another. We're called to give up our very life for one another. And that gets us to the next point. And these next couple points will be where we spend the majority of our time this morning.

That'll be the newness of the command. The newness of the command. The Lord calls it a new commandment here. If he's calling it new, we might be a bit confused as to what is really new about it.

How is it different from all of the different ways we've heard loving our neighbor be talked about before? You might think of passages way in the Old Testament. Think about Leviticus 19, verse 18.

[16:37] You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. If your name is Zach, you might think of Jesus teaching in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus amplifies the importance of even loving our enemies.

Takes it a step further, right? You might think of plenty of passages in Paul's letters that, yes, are coming after this, but poor were instructed to love others well. My point in saying all of that is this is clear throughout all of Scripture.

And so with that in mind, it kind of begs the question, what about the command when Jesus gives it here to the disciples, what is making it new? Why does he call it a new commandment?

And I honestly think we can see that pretty clearly in the text itself and we'll clarify that with some other Scripture as well. So when Jesus is saying this, we've said it about 20 times already today, he knows his time is coming short.

He will soon be crucified. What's about to happen is that he's giving up his life. What does that mean? That means the reality of God's love that is shown to us is about to become so much more clear than it has ever been before.

[17:52] So clear. What was, we even talked about in the Lethia way with the kids this morning, something that has been hidden in shadows, not quite fully understandable, will be fully known. God's redemptive plan of history will be here.

It's happening right now. And the disciples and us now will actually be able to actually see the love of God. Not just try to understand it, but see it perfectly displayed in Christ in so much fuller of a way

than ever before.

And so one way in which this commandment is new, that it's different from all of the ways in which we've been instructed to love our neighbors before, is that we actually have the perfect example of love now as we see it in the work of Christ.

We now have that example to follow. You might be thinking of all of the passages right now that explain that very idea. Maybe you're thinking of John 15, verses 12 and 13, that says, This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, than someone to lay down his life for his friends. It's the exact same idea. Or you might be thinking of classic John 3, 16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[19:13] Or you might be thinking of Romans 5, verses 6 through 8, For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And we can keep going and going and going and list all of the passages that tie the Lord's love for us directly to his death on the cross for us.

But that's so important, right? These passages are so precious to us because we actually see how massive the love of God for us is.

How he has loved us. He's loved us in such a way that he gave up everything, even his own life, for the sake of those he loved. And so the disciples here were seeing that happen.

They were seeing that happen. They knew it was about to happen. They didn't fully understand it. It was almost there. And so as they're seeing that perfect love of the Lord of the universe, that's how it's new, right?

[20:27] We are seeing the perfect love displayed. And let's remember, as we're reminded in those passages, that he did not give his life for perfect people, but gave his life for us while we were dead and our sins.

He shows his love perfectly for us in that he died for us when we could do absolutely nothing for him. And that's the same kind of love we're being called to here.

Not a love that thinks about what we might get in return. Not a love that loves when we could get a benefit, but a love for sinners. And if that sounds very difficult, you've been listening.

Right? So let's get to number three. The impossibility and possibility of the command. I just said that if we've been paying attention well, we'll realize that what we've been called to is incredibly difficult. I would wager to say it's impossible without the grace of our Lord on our behalf. And so what is going on? What is the standard that the Lord is setting? It's certainly really high, but is it something that we can't meet?

[21:45] Is it something that's just getting thrown out to strive for but we can't do? Well, I think we need to remember that while we can never honor the Lord perfectly, sometimes I think we're a little too harsh on what we believe we can and we cannot do with the Lord's help.

A scripture that comes to mind, I think we've shared it the most here in terms of a benediction, it's Ephesians 3 verses 20 and 21 where it says, Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever.

Amen. And something that I think is really important to note about that scripture when Paul is writing there is he's pointing out that the Lord is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think.

That's clear, but the next part is so important. According to the power at work within us, according to the Holy Spirit's work in each of us, I think sometimes we can err towards the side of feeling like our sin has so much power over us that we can't get out of it, that we can't make progress.

And while there's some good sentiment in that classic in the circles I grew up in, the I'm just an old sinner saved by grace kind of thinking, the Lord has also called us to sanctification.

[23:18] And while yes, there is effort on our part, he's the one ultimately doing that work. And so it's going to happen. He's going to accomplish it. We don't have to be stuck in our sin.

And so in light of that, this is a command we can walk faithfully in and always seek to continue growing in, just as everything else that the Lord has commanded us to put off or put on. We can grow, and by the Lord's grace, we will.

Years ago, I feel like the number one motion I saw Nathan make when he was preaching looked like this. like over and over and over again. And he was talking about progressive sanctification. And he explained how often we are, you know, doing well, moving on up, but then like crashing and feeling like we can't get back, but then we keep going up. But the general trend is always that we're moving up.

We're growing in Christ-likeness. We should remember that we can do that. And so this command is no different.

[24 : 22] We can love one another well. All right. Y'all go ahead and turn with me to Philippians 2. Philippians 2.

I'm stealing all of Alex Kohler's passages from the Lord's Supper if y'all haven't noticed it yet. But flip over there. While we've reflected that we can, we can actually grow in loving one another well, this is a passage that I think illustrates this perfectly.

He paired it with earlier parts of chapter 13. And I think it's, it feels like almost a direct application of how we can love the way that the Lord has loved us that we've just read about.

So let's read verses 1 through 11 here in Philippians 2. So if there's any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

[25 : 44] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

So that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Here in this passage we see Paul basically explain how to love as Christ has loved us. At the beginning of this section Paul is giving some very direct this is what you should do kind of exhortation.

But there in the middle he shows the mindset we are to have behind all those actions. Note in those first four verses Paul encourages to encourage, to have love, affection, sympathy, unity in Christ, to not have selfish ambition, but to count others' interests more significant than our own.

[26 : 52] But then in verse 5 Paul explains the mindset that we should have while carrying out these actions. And what is it? It's that we should be looking to the Lord. reading verse 5 through 8 again, have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men.

Being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross. Note, Paul is tying the thinking exactly like our Lord did where it's recorded back in John.

Our Lord commanded us to love one another as he has loved us. Paul gave this long list of what loving one another looks like and then ties it back to that same mindset of tracing it back to look at how the Lord has loved you.

Let's not think that we are higher than our master. Let us serve as he served. Just like Paul says here he emptied himself. He became a servant for us and even more than that he gave up his very life for us.

And that's the same love that we're called to have for others. We must humble ourselves seek to serve rather than to be served. Count others' interests more significant than our own just like our Lord did.

[28 : 21] And again this is impossible under our own strength. Absolutely impossible. But by the Lord's grace he will help us to walk in it. We can be obedient and so let us love as he is loved.

So let's get to number four. Number four. So these are some examples of the command. I mentioned earlier that I had a little bit of a tough time picking exactly what it would be that I wanted to preach.

I had considered doing a reverence sermon. I had my text picked out for it. I had tried to sit down and write a little bit of it and I just couldn't get my mind to it.

And I think the reason for that is my thinking was if I have one more sermon one more opportunity to speak truth to the church to you guys I wanted to speak about something that I believe has been the number one thing that I have learned about from CFC.

and also a thing that we can always continue to press into. And so this is where I landed. I believe as a church we do an incredible job of dying to ourselves and serving others.

[29 : 38] Of considering each other's interests ahead of our own of giving up our own lives for the sake of those around us. when I think of all the ways I've seen this done for me particularly over the past 10 years I think of so many times from the brother who taught me as a young believer how to actually study the word how to build daily habits in the word when I had never done that before to the whole church as a culture of the church and every individual seeming this direction of taking scripture so seriously and teaching me not to rely on my feelings but to embrace the firm foundation we have in the word to all the many people who have had so many hard conversations with me when I needed to be called out for my sin to the brother who is very firm with me and telling me that I finally needed to ask my wife out called me out of my laziness and showed me how I could serve her better to that same brother being there for me at the drop of a hat when that relationship fell apart and showed me through scripture that

I was being selfish and caring more about a relationship than I was about the woman I was trying to pursue and serve to another brother reminding me that I'm more important than a bird and the Lord cares so much for me when I was struggling to battle anxiety to many many accountability partners just giving unending hours of time to me just seeking to do that day in day out as long as it is called today exhort one another that no one's going to get hardened by the deceitfulness of sin to the many men and so many core groups over time that just again given up so much of their time and sought to live life with one another to all the community groups just seeking to press one other well and learn what it is like to live as a family when I was a young college student to even now to the couple who has literally never turned Margaret and I down when we've needed help or advice that gave up endless amounts of time to help us figure out how to deal with so many different situations and conflicts especially in early days of marriage to the elders that

I've seen go through great lengths to do absolutely everything they can for the sake of your souls the meetings that went and I'm confident still do go late into the night those men care about you those men are truly worthy of double honor having heard their hearts they are not perfect men but they always try to seek your very best and I could go on I could go on but I think you get the point it's those day in day out dying to someone's own desires that's the loving one another I would be wrong to not take the opportunity that I have right now to thank the whole church for the way you've loved me and for the way you've loved my family as Christ has loved the church so well for so many years but also let's remember that while we have such great examples in one another we see each other love really well we have the greatest example in

Christ our Lord gave up his very life for us he who knew no sin became sin so that in him we can become the righteousness of God our Lord loves us so well and he's now calling us to that same love for one another so one final point that's really just a bunch of questions for us to think about a lot of direct application point five are we following the command I think I've got four questions here so in other words are we choosing to love one another as Christ has loved us are we loving one another with the kind of love that would lay down our own life for those around us so first question do we remember the love by which we are loved do we remember the love by which we are loved we are not going to be able to love others well if we are forgetting the gospel ourselves if we aren't remembering that we are wretched sinners only justified and brought into

God's family by his great love we'll be tempted again and again and again to be thinking in terms of our own righteousness we'll begin to put hope in how well we are doing whether that day or that week or that month or that year whatever it may be as we're failing to believe that truth of the gospel we'll also end up in that thinking of the song satisfied in you that inbred feedback loop that some of us get very confused of like what is that talking about I think it's talking about that when we get stuck staring at the ground forgetting that ultimately our righteousness is not about us and we just go round and round and round looking to how we're doing and that's going to take us into a circle of being wrecked and wrecked and wrecked by the memory of our sin we've got to instead remember the grace that our Lord has shown to us we need to long for that remembrance of the Lord's love

just like a deer pants for water we have to have that to live second question do we remind each other of the love by which we are loved do we remind each other of the love by which we are loved if I'm honest

[35 : 25] Margaret and I about how we've been doing in this last little season of life jumping from one to two kids has been really hard the transition from zero to one felt a little crazy but the one to two transition has just been really hard on us we've struggled to make time to be together for one another to have good time in the word all the things have been hard Ross and I have a weekly phone call that I think he wakes up about 30 seconds before but he's so faithful to adjust to my early schedule and anyway we were talking early this week and I was frustrated with myself of struggling with sin and just kind of frustrated with how Margaret and I were doing and I had just talked all about this in prepping for this and what does he do when I'm frustrated he is like preaching this sermon right back to me that I've just talked to him about

I needed reminders of the truth that morning that this wasn't going to go well by how well I'm doing he reminded me so quickly that our righteousness comes from the Lord not us I needed that reminder that morning and I hope as a church there's so many of those reminders happening each week that we constantly remind each other of the love by which we are loved third question do we love one another as the Lord has loved us that's literally the text isn't it direct application there from the text do we love one another as the Lord has loved us do we actually actively seek to serve one another in ways that are sacrificial to ourselves do we put our own interests aside for the sake of others do we consider others more significant than ourselves do we give up our time our preferences to do so and then fourth question also straight out of the text what are we known for as a church what are we known for as a church the text makes it really clear that we will be known by our love for one another is that true of us so many of us here share so many common interests or common views that are not primary not gospel issues may we not be known by those more than we are known by our love for one another may we love one another the way that the Lord has loved us may the way we serve one another be a sweet savor of the gospel to those around us that those who see us know that we are Christ followers by the love we show for one another and with that in mind let's pray