

. . . *apart from me you can do nothing* (John 15:5)

Because the Lord Jesus Christ laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for each other.

A. What is the essence of love?

This morning, the Lord Jesus Christ once again reminded us of the essence of the **Ten Commandments**: wholehearted love for God and wholehearted love for our neighbour. While **love** is the essence of the Ten Commandments, what is the **essence** of love? This question is of **vital** importance because if we do not have love, we are noisy gongs or nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Moreover, if we do not have love, the Lord Jesus Christ may leave the congregation with his life-giving presence (Rev. 2:1-7). Furthermore, **Reflect**: *What would you say is the **essence** of love? How **important** is it for you to know the answer to this question.*

B. The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated the essence of love by laying down his life for us.

If we want to know what the essence of love is, we need to have a good look at the life and death of the **Lord Jesus Christ**. When we do, we will see that he demonstrated the essence of love by **laying down** his life for us. He did this from the **beginning** to the end of his life here on earth. As to the beginning, we read that the Lord Jesus laid aside his garment of **glory** by emptying himself of this glory and taking on the garment of a **slave** or servant (Phil. 2:6-8). As to his **public** ministry, we read the same. Every day again, he laid down his life for people as he performed the work of slave, **ministering** to their various needs as prophet (Mt. 5-7), priest (Mk. 1:32-35; Jn. 2:3-9) and king (Jn. 4:7-15; 6:1-14; cf. 1:16). Now with his impending death, Jesus performs a parable that is meant to show them how he will love them to the **highest degree** (13:1). It's Thursday evening. It is **dinnertime**, the time when the Passover lamb would be eaten and during which

meal Jesus would institute the Lord's Supper. At a certain moment, perhaps shortly after the argument his disciples had had about who was the greatest, Jesus gets up, **lays aside** his outer garments, ties a loincloth around his waist like a slave, pours water into a basin, kneels before his disciples and begins to **wash** their feet, drying them with his loincloth. With this act Jesus prophetically shows his disciples the **extent** of his love for them. Just as He laid aside his garments, He would lay down his **life** for them the next day on Calvary's cross (Jn. 10:11). What he had been doing his whole earthly life he would **then** do to the highest degree. This is the **essence** of love: always being willing to serve others—even to the point of being willing to die for them (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3; cf. Mt. 16:25).

C. The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated the essence of love by laying down his life for us as an example for us to follow.

Once Jesus had washed the feet of his disciples, he **puts on** his outer garments and takes his place at the table again. The disciples were used to calling Jesus **Teacher** and **Lord**. Well, says Jesus, they were **right** in doing so. If, as their Teacher and Lord, **Jesus** had laid aside his garments and demonstrated the extent of his serving love for them, how much more ought **they** not to do the same? After all, they are **servants** of their master and **messengers** of their sender! When they—and we—are servants of our master and messengers of our sender in this manner, we will be **blessed**. That is, we will experience the **joy of pilgrims** who serve each other in love because we know that this is the way that leads to the new heaven and the new earth. Moreover, we will experience this

pilgrim joy because we know ourselves to be **participating** with the Lord Jesus Christ in undoing the effects of the fall into sin by subverting the sinful power structures of this world and setting up hopeful signs of the coming kingdom of God. **Reflect**: *Whose feet **have** you washed lately, i.e. who have you selflessly been serving in love? Whose feet do you **need** to wash right now, but you just can't bring yourself to do this? What **hinders** you from washing someone feet you should be washing?*

D. The Lord Jesus Christ gives us office bearers to demonstrate what serving love is all about and to encourage us to serve each other in love.

The Lord Jesus Christ gives us **office bearers** to demonstrate what serving love is all about and to encourage us to serve each other in love. **Elders** do this by selflessly giving of themselves and their time in being there for us as prophets, priests and kings. **Deacons** do the same by always being there for us as those relief workers who provide relief to the needy and/or organize it both within and outside the congregation. **Reflect**: *Do you see the office bearers as **gifts** of our Lord Jesus Christ meant to encourage you in washing other peoples' feet?*

D. Demonstrating the essence of love is not a natural work, but a fruit of the Spirit of Jesus.

Demonstrating the essence of love is not a natural work, but a fruit of the **Spirit** of Jesus. Consequently, all office bearers will always **point** you to the Lord Jesus Christ so that you can experience the mystery of living, remaining and maturing in him through faith.

