



Investigating John 13-17 as a missional narrative¹

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Abstract

This article investigates the Farewell Discourse in John 13-17 from the perspective of missional theology. A narrative approach is followed to ascertain how John's Gospel establishes a basis for the Father sending the Son, who sent the Spirit and his followers into the world. The overarching motive for this mission is God's love for the world and his desire for the world to know him and believe Jesus is indeed his Son. Within this mission the commandment to love is given to Jesus' followers as a clear instruction to follow the same sacrificial pattern of humility as practiced by Jesus.

Keywords

Missional hermeneutics, Gospel of John, Ecclesiology, Farewell discourse, Missio Dei

Introduction

The congregation in which I am serving as one of the pastors, the Dutch Reformed Church Brackenfell West, recently embarked on a journey of discovering its missional calling in the community. This isn't the first time in this church's thirty-year history that it engaged in some process of strategic planning. As such, the practice of constantly refining a church's preferred future is accepted as a normal part of congregational development. However, where these practices tend to focus on managerial styled interventions, the journey we embarked on was a profoundly theological exercise.

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The task team entrusted with the mapping of the route spent more than a year prayerfully reading a single passage from the Scriptures – Luke 10:1–12. Since the journey formed part of a formal association with the South African Partnership for Missional Churches, the church members that formed the Task Team as well as the Church's Management Board were challenged to engage with God's Word as a formational element in the quest for the church's particular calling. Fundamental to this quest was the affirmation that the church is called to be in partnership with God in the world and acknowledge that it is God's calling and not the church's own (Keifert 2006:30).

As spiritual practice, this dwelling in the Word constituted a major paradigm shift in the way the church board viewed their role as leaders of the congregation. It impacted the way church meetings were conducted. It transformed the pastoral formational ministry of the small groups. And it developed into an on-going process of theological interpretation as an integral part of the church's ordinary ministry practices. To borrow some remarks from Joel Green (2011:4), this shift embodies the congregation's concern with the role of Scripture in the faith and formation of persons and the ecclesial community, emphasising the potentially mutual influence of Scripture in theological discourse and the self-understanding and critical reflection of the church's practices.

As a matter of theological practice, discerning the missional calling of a church is part of the increasing paradigm shift towards a missional hermeneutic where the emphasis falls on a mission-centred church with the *missio Dei* of God's salvific work becoming the overarching instituting moment in the *missiones ecclesiae* (Bosch 1991:370). Thus, it makes sense to view the emerging ecclesiology as essentially missional expressions of the local church everywhere in the world. According to Wright (2006:63–64), the *missio Dei* is presented to humankind through the Biblical narrative. It begins with the story of God's purpose in creation; moves on to the conflict of humanity's rebellion against that purpose and spends the majority of the narrative journey in the stories of God's redemptive purposes being worked out on the stages of human history; and ends with eschatological depictions of God's new creation beyond the horizon of our own history. Embedded in this so-called metanarrative is the continuing stories of the

church in every part of the world that make it their mission to listen to God's Word and then re-enact his redemptive work in their own lives. The process of theological reflection is therefore never finished. As such, it can be called a process of identity formation (Anderson 2009:11).

One of the changing roles in such a missional endeavour is the role of the leadership in the local church. Bosch (1991:470) called this the rediscovery of the apostolate of the laity, the priesthood of all believers. Barrett *et al* (2004:139) explained that missional authority constitutes one of the distinct patterns of missional faithfulness and described it as a "community of persons who, in a variety of ways and with a diversity of functional roles and titles, together practices the missional authority that cultivates within the community the discernment of missional vocation and is intentional about the practices that embed that vocation in the community's life." This missional leadership ecclesiology, then, forms the focus of our hermeneutical investigation. If it is correct to assume a shift in the understanding of ecclesial leadership in mission is currently in progress, it would be just as correct to assume this shift should be undergirded by theological reflection where the voice of Scripture is heard, and its story retold to an audience that might even ask different questions than the generation before it. This approach corresponds with what Green (1995:179) called "the multiplicity of possible readings," where a text is understood according to the various ways it is construed in given reading situations.

Within Johannine research the question of a Johannine ecclesiology identifies itself as a critical field of study (Brown 1966:cv). Very little explicit ecclesiological terminology exists in the gospel – with the notable absence of classical phrases such as *ἐκκλησία* (Beasley-Murray 1991:102; Van der Watt 2000:438). We may assume that the implied ecclesiology in the gospel embraces the world of the leaders of the Johannine communities as initial recipients of the narrative. Given the assumption that John's Gospel is dated towards the end of the first century CE (Tolmie 1995:3), these leaders were probably second-generation Christians that received the gospel tradition orally rather than experiencing the events first-hand. The focus of the narrator telling of Jesus' story could just as much be on his readers' reception of the information as on the events he chose to include in his

narrative. To this regard, Painter (1997:573) pointed towards the persuasive arguments presented by JL Martyn concerning the way the conflict of the Johannine communities was reflected by the narrative of the conflict of Jesus and his disciples with the Jewish authorities (cf. Jn 9:34; 12:42; 16:2).

Since John's Gospel is a well-structured, closely-knit text in which the material is thoroughly interrelated (Van der Watt 2007:3), the power of the oratory lies in its ability to create a linguistic, textual, pictorial world that addresses the needs and yearnings of a concrete religious community. It is in the encounter of tradition and community, story and theology that the Fourth Gospel found its voice (O' Day 1995:345). This "two-level drama" simultaneously tells the story of Jesus and of the Johannine community (Koester 1991:52), impressing upon later readers the notion that this Gospel was written with a different purpose than a mere historical depiction of Jesus' life and ministry. This makes John's Gospel an excellent source for the investigation we have embarked upon.

Finally, John's Gospel contains narrative material that exclusively deals with Jesus' ministry towards his disciples. The cohesive character of John 13-17 and its setting as a Farewell Discourse between Jesus and his closest circle of followers, leads us to consider this passage from the perspective of missional leadership. Could these passages be read as John's way of communicating the Great Commission? Is it possible to establish traces of missional vocation in Jesus' final comforting words to his own people?

Finally, following the footsteps of Du Rand (1990:8-13) the perspective of the contemporary reader is used as the starting point for reading the text. The Johannine narrative progresses along the relationship between the relationships of the characters and the events narrated, and as the conflict between characters and events unfolds itself, the reader is involved in the story to such an extent that the implied readers and the fictional readers (those reading the text at a later stage, for example) cannot be separated from one another. From this viewpoint a narratological approach is used to provide a holistic perspective on the events being told. This mostly text immanent approach is ultimately employed to serve as a verification or falsification of the contemporary readers' research question that was asked to the Gospel.

The departure of Jesus as foundation for the mission of his disciples

John's Gospel centrally placed Jesus' departure from his disciples as the setting of the Farewell Discourse in John 13:1: "... εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ ἡ ὥρα ἵνα μεταβῇ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἀγαπήσας τοὺς ἰδίους τοὺς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς (Jn 13:1). The remark that Jesus was going back to his Father is also repeated in 14:12, 14:28, 16:10 & 16:28. This thought of Jesus' impending death permeates the section (Segovia 1991:4) and caused distress (Jn 14:1a) and misunderstanding (Jn 14:5, 8) among the disciples. As described elsewhere in the rest of John's Gospel (cf. 7:39, 12:23-25, 27-33), Jesus' death is described here as his glorification (13:31-32; 12:16, 23, 27-28) and as that of the Father (17:1-5). The glorification of Jesus and the Father is presented as already accomplished realities (Segovia 1991:70-71).

However, it is not the mention of his departure, but the way Jesus extended his mission to his disciples, that form the focus of interest. First, let us establish how John's Gospel perceived the mission of Jesus. Jesus came from above (Jn 3:31, 8:23) as the "only Son from the Father" (Jn 1:14) in order to make the Father known (Jn 1:18). Those who received the power to become children of God, believe this and accept Jesus as God's true light, (Jn 1:12) by being born into the world from which Jesus originally came (lit. ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν, also Jn 3:5-8). The manner in which Jesus showed the world that he indeed is the Son of God was not by signs, but by his words and his impending death and resurrection (Jn 2:19-25, 10:17-18). Accordingly, the way into this acceptance is through believing and obedience in doing what is true (Jn 3:16, 21, 6:28-29, 10:7-9). Suffice it to say that John's entire Gospel is pervaded by this divine mission (Köstenberger & Swain 2008:149).

Jesus Himself was acutely aware of completing his mission and that it is a mission he received from the Father who sent him (Jn 4:34, 5:19, 30, 6:38-39, 7:16, 28-29, 8:28-29, 42, 11:42, 12:49-50). A striking characteristic of Jesus' mission is the focus John's Gospel placed on the hearing and believing of Jesus' words (Jn 4:42, 50, 5:24, 6:40, 8:30-32, 51, 10:27-30, 11:25-26). This message is expanded to include that one who believes in Jesus also believes in God, who sent Jesus (Jn 12:44-45). Through hearing Jesus' words one enters into a relationship with him (Jn 6:35, 6:48-51, 8:18-19, 9:35-38).

Upon his departure, Jesus made it clear that he is leaving to fulfil another purpose, namely preparing place in his Father's house for the sake of his followers (Jn 14:1-4 – Segovia 1991:83). Once again this caused some misunderstanding among his disciples. Jesus had to re-iterate his own missional authority and the way a person can "come to the Father" – by knowing Jesus as the one who showed them the Father. He did this by explaining the unity he experiences with the Father, as they are one. It is stated in quite a dramatic way (Jn 14:3) with Jesus saying he not only is the way to salvation but also the centre of truth and life, which are attributes of God (Gruenler 1986:96).

Then Jesus made the later repeated remark that those who believe in Jesus will do the same, and even greater works than Jesus himself did as he is going to the Father (Jn 14:12-14). He even bestowed the same authority he received from the Father upon his followers, as they will be able to ask anything from the Father. It is important to note that Jesus continues with his mission on earth (Jn 14:14) but henceforth he intentionally uses his followers in this mission (Segovia 1991:91-92). To further enforce the intensity of this authority, Jesus later (Jn 16:22-24) ties it to his death and resurrection pointing towards the fact that this event will enable his followers to embark on their mission (Carson 1980:42).

Thus, we see how Jesus' departure serves as the catalyst for him commissioning his disciples with full authority to continue with his mission.

The feet washing event as a missional metaphor

Let us pick up on John's narrative in John 13 at the depiction of the feet-washing event. The initiating remark (Jn 13:3-4) resembles a kenosis moment similar to the one be found in Philippians 2:5-11 (Stevick 2011:35). John tells us how Jesus knew he received all authority from God and how he had full clarity on his heavenly identity, and therefore he started washing the feet of his disciples (Stevick 2011:30). It could be elucidating to take a somewhat closer look at the narrative.

When challenged about the inappropriateness of doing the work of a slave (Carson 1980:11, Stander & Louw 1990:245), Jesus replied that Peter won't

have any part of him if he isn't clean, upon which Peter asked to be washed in full and Jesus made a statement about the necessity of his actions (Jn 13:6–11). Tolmie (1995:28) asserted that this is the first interpretation of the feet washing and should be viewed as part of a juxtaposition of true over false discipleship demonstrated by love and knowledge (Tolmie 1995:72). Barrett (1978:436) explained the cleansing as a representation of their cleansing from sin in the sacrificial blood of Christ – and for this he alluded to John 1:29 (where Jesus is called ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) and John 19:34 (where Jesus' side was pierced).

According to Newman & Nida (1980:431) the phrase, γνώση δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα, remains vague. They chose to apply the reference to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Subsequently, the phrase, οὐκ ἔχεις μέρος μετ' ἐμοῦ (specifically the use of μέρος) can be translated in accordance with Moulton's (1977:264) possibilities pertaining to “a partnership portion, partnership, or fellowship. Newman & Nida (1980:432) accepted that this phrase has several different translation possibilities. They then proceed to interpret it from the viewpoint of Jesus death. Finally, the remark, “καὶ ὑμεῖς καθαροὶ ἐστε, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ πάντες,” was written in the plural, therefore implying that Jesus was referring to the group as a whole and not only to Peter (Newman & Nida 1980:433, Busse 2002:207). John 13:11 then enlighten the reader with a direct reference to the fact that Judas Iscariot will betray Jesus.

In light of the fact that John's Gospel frequently employs misunderstanding as literary technique (e.g. Jn 2:18–21; 4:14–15; 6:51–52 – Culpepper 1983:152) we find here possible traces of a similar situation. While Peter objected to Jesus' action by washing their feet as their leader, Jesus had to explain that this act includes them in his fellowship. With this, Jesus indicated that the believing community is constituted through participation in him (Gruenler 1986:90). It would seem that Peter misunderstood this as a ritual act – since the washing of hands was mostly a Jewish ceremonial ritual (Stander & Louw 1990:48). Then Jesus explained how he is setting the example for his followers' behaviour. It stems from the fact that he, as Lord and Teacher, voluntarily humiliated himself by washing their feet. He invites them to acknowledge that humility and servanthood are essential characteristics of divine love and of the new society (Gruenler 1986:91). By being included in this way they partake in the post-Easter, eschatologically

sacrificial missional movement (Busse 2002:208) by following Jesus in the laying off his life in order to give life. This is underscored by Jesus' remark in John 13:20.

The command to love

When one reads through the Farewell Discourse it is striking how many times John's Gospel refers to love. The discourse starts out with how much Jesus loved his people (Jn 13:1-2); it establishes a new commandment – to love one another in the same way Jesus loved his followers – as the yardstick for discipleship (Jn 13:34-35, 15:12-13); it equates love for Jesus with the keeping of his commandments (Jn 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:9-10); it makes a clear argument of the love the Father has for the followers of Jesus because they loved and believed Jesus came from the Father (Jn 16:26-28); and finally how Jesus' followers and their subsequent followers share in the glory that God gave to Jesus in order for the world to see how the Father loved them in the same way He loved Jesus (Jn 17:22-26). The command is meant to serve as a guiding principle during the time of separation from Jesus and functions as Jesus' parting legacy to his disciples (Segovia 1991:76-77). It serves as replacement for Jesus' presence in the midst of the disciples.

Earlier in John's Gospel – John 3:16-18 – John established God's love as the reason for sending Jesus on the mission to this world (Barrett 1978:215). Moreover, a picture is drawn of perfect unity in love between Father and Son (Morris 1971:247) to the extent that Jesus received authority over everything in this world. This argument is repeated in the Farewell Discourse. The difference, however, is the inclusion of Jesus' disciples in this perfect unity in love. Not only will his followers obey all of Jesus' commandments, they will also share in the glory bestowed upon Jesus. They should see love for Jesus as encompassing love for one another, a proper fulfilment of Jesus' other specific directives, as well as belief itself (Segovia 1991:95).

Through this the unbelieving world will come to know God. Yet it must also be taken into account that the love God had for this world manifested itself through the mission of Jesus. The commandment to love one another is qualified by the fact that it is the same love Jesus has for his followers, which the Father has for Jesus and therefore for Jesus' followers as well.

This love is sacrificial in nature – it forms the starting point of the mission to save the world. By obeying the commandment, Jesus' followers actively share in his mission to this world.

The role of the paraclete

The discussion on the missional character of Farewell Discourse would be incomplete if we do not ponder the role the Paraclete is playing in this regard. When Jesus first mentioned the Holy Spirit (rather, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας – John 14:16 ff.), he is introduced as another Paraclete. We find John calling Jesus the Paraclete with the Father in 1 John 2:1, allowing us to appreciate that the Holy Spirit functions as his successor after his departure (Segovia 1991:95). This Spirit of Truth lives within the followers of Jesus and they know him in a similar way as they know Jesus (Jn 14:18). He will replace Jesus' encouraging and strengthening presence with them while on earth (Köstenberger & Swain 2008:154). Because of this, the followers of Jesus will know that Jesus is in his Father, they in Jesus and Jesus in them. The Paraclete has the same provenance and role as Jesus and thus fulfils the role of keeping alive the relationship the disciples had with Jesus (Segovia 1991:96). He will achieve this by teaching them and helping them to remember what Jesus said. The result is that they are at peace and have no fear for being left without Jesus.

In John 15 the issue of hatred from the world is presented. Jesus made the case that the world do not know Him as they do not know the Father. The remarks of Jesus about “the world” hating his disciples – in John 15:18 – imply people on earth who oppose God, because they are aligned with the power of evil (Barrett 1978:479; Newman & Nida 1980:491). The verb *μ* is repeated twice in this sentence and the second time it is used in the perfect tense (*μεμίσηκεν*) to indicate the enduring character of this action. The world's hatred actually has a long history and it is not about to end soon. John describes the contrast between Jesus' disciples and the world in absolute categories (Newman & Nida 1980:492).

The disciples do not belong to the world as they are chosen from it by Jesus, thereby providing the reason for its hatred: they are now part of the world to which Jesus belongs and this stands in direct opposition with the ideals

of the world. Moreover, they share in Jesus' mission, and as the previous discussion focused on their love for Jesus and each other, the antithesis of love – hate must also be explored (Lindars 1972:493).

In John 15:20 Jesus provides a shimmer of hope on this negative picture of the followers of the world. Where-as the depiction of the world's attitude towards Jesus and his disciples has been completely negative; Jesus seems here to be fine-tuning his view somewhat (Newman & Nida 1980:493). Some people from the world will obey the disciples' teaching just as they obeyed that of Jesus (lit. *εις τὸν λόγον μου ἐστῆρησαν καὶ τὸν υμῆτερον τηρήσουσιν*). All is not lost, since the purpose of keeping his word is to show to the people of the world the light and how to start living in it. Through this, Jesus also showed his disciples that they could expect success in their mission and not rejection only (Lindars 1972:494).

John 15:21 provide the motive for this hatred and persecution: *αλλὰ ταῦτα πάντα ποιήσουσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς διὰ τὸ ὄνομα μου ὅτι οὐκ οἶδασιν τὸν πέμψαντά με*. There are two reasons for this persecution: First, the disciples are part of the world of Jesus (lit. for Jesus' name's sake), and secondly, the people of the world do not know the One who sent Jesus, the Father (Newman & Nida 1980:494).

From John 15:22-25 the world's guilt is discussed as something that grows out of this persecution: The world hated Jesus - it will hate His followers as well. The world is persecuting Jesus – it will persecute His followers as well. The world didn't believe Jesus' word (or message, or teaching); it will similarly not accept the words of His disciples. Moreover, Jesus spoke to the people of the world and did works among them, therefore they now have knowledge of their sin and this takes away any opportunity for an excuse (Newman & Nida 1980:494-495). If Jesus did not come to earth to proclaim God's message, the world would not be guilty of sin.

As it is, the world has seen what Jesus did and it heard his teaching, making them guilty because by rejecting Him and his message they demonstrate their hatred of both Jesus and the Father who sent Him (Newman & Nida 1980:490-491, 495). This helps us understand the nature of Jesus' message: He came to proclaim the truth of people's bondage in sin and the resulting guilt they are suffering because of it. He also came to show them the way

out of this bondage by doing the things that was unique to his Messianic character. Yet, this way was rejected, making the people of the world even guiltier.

Incidentally, this theme is a recurrence of the discussions Jesus had with the Jews in John 8:12-59 and again in John 10:22-42. In John 8 Jesus provided his own testimony to the challenges brought by them, as it is true and valid because it is confirmed by the Father who verifies it (Brown 1971:340). In this passage, Jesus adopted Jewish legal theory to prove his point that He can be his own witness (Schnackenburg 1979:194), since he has the Father as his second witness. They are in close union with one another, as the Father was sending him, an action that hasn't stopped yet (Morris 1971:443). In John 10 Jesus called upon his works as well as his words as testimony of his authority. Jesus not only told the unbelieving Jews about his exalted origin and nature, He also proved it with the words that accompanied his works (Hendriksen 1959/2:121).

In John 15:26-16:4a Jesus includes a new set of witnesses of his authority and unity with the Father: The Paraclete will bear witness, as he is sent by Jesus from the Father Himself. Second, the disciples will also bear witness, since they have been with Jesus from the beginning. The Paraclete serves as the source of strength for Jesus' followers during times of persecution: The Helper, Spirit of truth, who comes from the Father, will enable them to endure.

Newman and Nida (1980:497) argued that the complex locational relations in the clause, *ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρο* shows the role of Jesus, as the agent is primarily causative. It can thus be translated, as "I will cause him to go from the Father and come to you." The testimony of the Helper is about Jesus, and he will unceasingly continue to testify about Jesus (Barrett 1978:482).

This text implies that the Spirit is personal (Brown 1970:689). The causative clause of John 15:26 help us to understand the intricate relation between the testimony of the Paraclete and the testimony of Jesus' disciples. The Paraclete testifies about Jesus, since He comes from the Father and was with Jesus from the beginning – even before creation. He is sent to earth to bear witness about Jesus, thereby reinforcing the score of testimonies

about his identity and mission. Furthermore, He is able to do it, because of the fact that He has intimate knowledge of, and functioned in, an intimate relation with Father and Son (Morris 1971:683).

Similarly the disciples, are sent by Jesus to bear witness about Him as they, too were with Jesus from the beginning (that is, the beginning of his earthly ministry – Lindars 1971:497; Newman & Nida 1980:498; Ridderbos 1997:527). Underscoring the point is the emphatic use of the pronoun, *ὁ* *μεν*. Moreover, by repeating the words of John 13:16 in John 15:20, Jesus seems to have transferred His mission onto the disciples. Thus, their testimony must be understood as that they were there, they know Jesus personally and furthermore, they continue to do and say what He did and said. They must accept responsibility of this task as it cannot be evaded (Morris 1971:684).

Moreover, their testimony cannot be separated from the testimony of the Paraclete since the Paraclete is invisible to the world and can only be heard through the testimony of the disciples (Brown 1970:700). The relation of this witness is similar to the relation between the Father and the Son (Beutler 1972:366).

The promise of the Counsellor enables the disciples not to have their faith shaken in the midst of hardship and persecution (Newman & Nida 1980:499). This more specifically means He will protect them from losing their faith in times of persecution. As it is, Jesus wants his disciples to appreciate the degree of animosity towards them, as He describes how the persecutors will think they are doing a service to God by expelling them from the synagogues (Newman & Nida 1980:500). John also reiterates the cause of the persecution as the world knowing neither the Father nor Jesus (Jn 16:3). The phrase used here, *οὐκ ἐγνώσαν*, actually denotes a constant truth as it is used in the aorist tense – meaning something like “they have never known the Father or me.”

Jesus is telling these things to them in advance, so that they will be able to withstand the pressure to leave the faith. John 16:4a uses the expression *μνημονεύετε αὐτῶν* *οτι* *ἐγὼ* *εἶπον* *ὁ* *μὲν*, not to suggest that the disciples will forget what Jesus said, but to think about what he has said (Newman & Nida 1980:500). Jesus speaks, after all, of things, which the

church will remember and understand only in the light of its subsequent, post-resurrection history (Smith 1986:54).

In prayer we find mission

When the Farewell Discourse concludes with Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer" (Carson 1980:175), we find a final missional commission contained in the narrative. It is here that we find the clearest expression of the intimate interworking of Father and Son (Gruenler 1986:122). Jesus summarizes the themes of the mutual glorification, his equality with the Father and its extension to the family of believers (Gruenler, 1986:123) in terms of his mission: αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ ἵνα γινώσκωσι σὲ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν (Jn 17:3). Within this exchange of glory we find the Son as the Father's appointed agent, where he gives glory to the Father as a revealing, life-giving action, a showing forth of the divine splendour (Stevick, 2011:325-236).

Jesus then turns his attention to his followers and he affirms their faith based upon their believing Jesus' words. Their belief is the Father's gift to the Son (Stevick, 2011:327). He asks the Father to include them in the unity which he and the Father experiences. He revisits the animosity his followers will experience from the world and commits their safety into the hands of the Father, whilst they stay in the world. Jesus prayed for their sanctification as they are sent into the world in a manner similar to the way he was sent by the Father (Jn 17:18). Thus, the people of God who do not belong in the world have to take responsibility in the world: the world is the setting in which believers participate through Jesus, in God's saving, freeing, and uniting purpose (Stevick 2011:353).

Then John's Gospel drew a new circle in the ever-increasing spiral of the narrative: Jesus not only prayed for his followers, he also prayed for those who came to faith through their ministry (lit. διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν). They are also to be included in the unity Jesus is asking for (Carson 1980:197); therefore Jesus also bestows the glory he received from the Father upon them. He restates the purpose of his mission as the purpose of their mission: ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας καὶ ἡγάπησας αὐτοὺς καθὼς ἐμὲ ἡγάπησας (Jn 17:23).

Mapping the Farewell Discourse as Missional Narrative

Let us finally try and summarize the missional themes presented by John's Farewell Discourse. It would be appropriate to approach this effort schematically.

Jesus' Mission	The Disciples' Mission
He loved his own people to the very end.	They are commanded to love one another as Jesus loved them.
He received all things from the Father; therefore he humiliates himself as a servant.	They are no better than the Teacher and should do the same as he did.
He spoke and acted on the authority He received from the Father in order for people to know the Father.	If they believe in Jesus they are able to do the things Jesus did, especially since Jesus is leaving.
He sent the Spirit of Truth to dwell in his followers.	Through the Paraclete they will be taught and remember everything Jesus said after he is gone.
Jesus' words, deeds and the testimony of the Father asserted the truth of his mission.	The testimony of the Paraclete as well as their own will continue to assert the truth of Jesus mission.
The Holy Spirit only acts from what he hears from Jesus and continually glorifies him, just as Jesus did with the Father.	They only act from what they hear from the Spirit and continually glorify Jesus.
He is sending his followers in unity into the world to speak the words of Jesus.	Those who come to faith because of their words are included in the union created by Jesus in order for the world to know that Jesus has been sent by the Father.

Conclusion

This investigation has barely scraped the surface of John's Gospel narrative in chapters 13-17. So much more can and should be said. We haven't even begun to look into the metaphor of the vine in John 15, for instance. And we could also delve deeper into the love commandment's internal dynamics, since it forms part of Jesus' vision of new way his followers' actions to one another reflect this commandment: How does this double ring of loving the world just as Jesus did by loving one another in a radical new way adequately reflect Jesus' mission to the world (Thyen 2005:608-609)?

So many things can indeed be understood better. What we do understand, is how John's Gospel presents a revolutionary mission theology: it is Trinitarian, that is, as originating in and by the Father, as redemptively grounded and divinely mediated by the Son – Jesus, and as continued and empowered by the Spirit of truth (Köstenberger & Swain 2008:156). It is clear that we can read the Farewell Discourse as a narrative of missional vocation.

Therefore, we find joy in this theological engagement with the meaning of the Johannine narrative within the community of God's people – past, present and future (Green 2011:126). We endeavour to recast in our specific context and culture the calling of Jesus consecrating us as integral part of his redemptive work on earth. Even though he left this world, he did not leave us alone. Through his Counsellor he is ever present in our midst, and through the Paraclete we live in complete unity with his love. We are enlisted to share the love the Father has for the world. We are in mission.

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