

John 13:31-35
5th Sunday of Easter
May 2, 2010

John 13:31-35 (New International Version)

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

³¹When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. ³²If God is glorified in him, ^[a] God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. ³³"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. ³⁴"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

When we speak about glorifying Jesus, we often do so in terms of what we say and sing. Singing hymns of praise and offering prayers of thanksgiving are appropriate and God-pleasing ways in which we glorify the Lord. But did you ever stop to think that Jesus is also glorified by the things that are done, not only by Jesus but also by us, his disciples? That's the thought and encouragement we want to consider this morning as we look at these words from the gospel of John.

WE TOO CAN GLORIFY THE LORD!

- I. Because of his love for us,**
- II. By our love for one another.**

Our sermon text for today begins with the words "When he was gone..." The "he" is referring to Judas. Jesus had just given him the piece of bread identifying him as the one who would betray him. Recall what Jesus then said to Judas: "What you are about to do, do quickly." We know what Judas did. He went to Jesus' enemies and betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. So when he left that upper room where Jesus had celebrated the last Passover meal, Judas set into motion the events that would lead to Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion.

But before it all happened Jesus explained to his disciple that that was how he would be glorified. **31**When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. **32**If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. **33**My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come."

Where do you suppose Jesus was going where his disciples could not go? The obvious answer is that he was going to go to the cross where he would suffer and die for the sins of the world. Only he could go there because he is the sinless Son of God who alone could offer the perfect sacrifice for our sins! The amazing thing is that is the way he wanted it. The work of salvation was to be his and his alone.

Why did he want to do that work for us? You know. Because he loved us. Understand again, what that love is. The Greek word that Jesus uses is "agape." Agape love is not some romantic or cuddling kind of love between husband or wife or parent or child that is reciprocal. It's a one-sided love that loves even though the one who is loved is unlovable. And it's a love that seeks the best interest of others not self interests!

Did you catch that? It's a love that loves even though the one who is loved is unlovable. That's who we are. We are the ones who have nothing in us or about us that is worth loving. We are sinful through and through. Every word, thought, and deed is always tainted with sin. Because of that we deserved the biggest "Dear John" letter from God in which God would have been justified in saying, "You are not worth my love and I don't want to be with you or have you in my presence anymore. Away from me into hell."

But wonder of wonders, that's not what our Savior God did. He chose to love us in spite of ourselves, and then, in that agape love, he did what was necessary so that we could be in his presence, so that we could be his beautiful bride to all eternity. He came to this earth and did the dirtiest job anyone could have done. No, it wasn't cleaning up pig manure or emptying out septic tanks, the kind of dirty jobs you see on the cable show "The dirtiest jobs ever." It was far worse than that. God placed on him the filth of sin from all of us and then he was given to drink from the putrid taste of hell for each of us. He did that because he loved us.

That is why the Father glorified Jesus. That's what Jesus was getting at when he said, "My children, I will be with you only a little longer." Forty days after he rose from the dead, Jesus removed his visible presence from his disciples by ascending into heaven. Sitting at God's right hand he is now enjoying the place of honor and glory that only he deserves. There he not only receives and welcomes the hymns of praise sung by the angels in heaven, he welcomes our hymns of praise by which we also glorify his name. That's what makes our worship so special when we gather in church.

Our worship is not about you or me. We are not the focus. The focus is on Jesus. It's all about glorifying him. We have reason to glorify him. He loved us.

11. We glorify him not only because he loves us but also by how we love one another. **34**"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **35**By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

What do you suppose Jesus meant when he said "a new command I give to you, 'Love one another?'" Hadn't God already given the command "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind; and love your neighbor as your self?" He surely did! So what did Jesus mean when he said, "A new command I give you, 'Love one another?'" I believe the answer is given in the words "As I have loved you?" We are to love one another as Jesus loved us! And how did Jesus love us? His love is measured by the cross. In other words, because of love he was willing to give up his life for us. That's how we are to love another.

What that means is that our love for each other is to be measured by the cross too! Not Jesus' cross but the cross that Jesus asked us to pick up and carry for him. Remember how Jesus once said, "If any man would follow me, he must deny himself and pick up his cross and follow me." In other words, loving others as Jesus loved us means that we are to be willing to deny our rights, our privileges, our wants and put the needs of others first. Loving each other as Christ loved us means saying "no" to our sinful desires to strike back and get even with those who have hurt us. It means being willing to help and forgive all people, even those who may wrong or hurt us time and again. Remember agape love means loving in action even though the one loved is not worthy of love.

In our second reading for today we have a fuller explanation of what it means to love one another as Christ loved us. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul explains, not what love is, but what love does. Interestingly enough, Paul uses the same word for love that Jesus does, "Agape." What does love do? Listen, **4**Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5**It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6**Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7**It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres **8**Love never fails."

Can you and I, sinners that we are really love like that? Is that how you love your spouse? Is that how you love your children? Is that how you love your parent? Is that how you love your fellow classmate, or coworker? Is that how you love your fellow congregational member? Is that how we love each other?

Jesus said, "All men will you that you are my disciples if you love one another?" Can people tell that we believe in Jesus by how we love each other? Sadly, all too often, people on the outside of the church looking in say, "If that's the way they act toward each other and talk about one another, why would I want to join that church?"

We all have failed in loving one another as Christ has love each of us. Therein lies our great comfort. We fail in our love, but Jesus didn't and will not fail in his love. He loved us perfectly and he proved it by dying for our sins. That's why we keep coming back to church and going back to his word and dining as often as we can with him at the holy supper. Because there we hear good news about his loving forgiveness. When we confess our sins to him and place our trust in him for that forgiveness, that's the greatest praise and glory we can

give him. Having tasted of his forgiving love, we then find our strength to love one another. That's how we glorify the Lord.

Do you know what I thought of while writing this sermon? I thought of parents just about ready to go out for dinner and the last words they speak to their children are "Behave and be nice to one another." Or I think of a parent on the deathbed saying to his children who have gathered there, when I am gone, love each other. Isn't that what Jesus is doing here? He was leaving, going to heaven. As he leaves he told his disciples and us today, "Love one another." That's how we can glorify the Lord. He deserves such glory because he loved us. Amen.