

Rev. Anthony T. Bertram

GLORIFYING LOVE

John 13:31-35; Easter 5C; May 17-18, 2025; HS Baccalaureate

P Alleluia! Christ is risen! **C** He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Our Gospel today from John 13 begins: **When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.”** When who had gone out? Was it Jesus who left somewhere and then spoke, or someone else who went out? One of the confusing things about this Gospel text is that we hear it deep into the Easter season, yet it reports events of the night when Jesus was betrayed, about twelve hours before He was crucified.

We need to hear today’s passage in its context: It was the night Jesus celebrated the last Passover when He washed His disciples’ feet and instituted the Lord’s Supper. In the verses right before (13:21-30), Jesus had told His disciples that one of them would betray Him. The question they had was who would betray Him. It was the one Jesus said He would give a morsel of bread to. **“So when He had dipped the morsel, He gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘What you are going to do, do quickly.’ ... So, after receiving the morsel of bread, [Judas] immediately went out.”** This clarifies how our Gospel Reading begins. **When he [Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Jesus] had gone out, Jesus said.**

Judas Iscariot’s betrayal of Jesus set into motion the Passion and resurrection of God’s Son, which Jesus says glorifies Him and His heavenly Father. **“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.”** Jesus describes His agonizing suffering and death on the cross as something glorious for Him and His Father. It is God’s glorifying love that I want us to focus on today, which is much different from the world’s concept of what is glorious.

In our world, sports teams winning championships are glorified. Athletic stars, entertainment celebrities and social media influencers with millions of followers and fans are glorified. Being wealthy is glorified. Beautiful things and people are glorified. Health and personal strength are glorified.

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Weakness is not glorified. Suffering is not glorified. Death is not glorified. Poverty is not glorified. Ugliness is not glorified. Being unpopular or hated is not glorified...according to the world, and we are people of this world.

So, when Jesus speaks of His suffering and death as being glorified, and God His Father being glorified in Him by this suffering and death, it should put us out of our comfort zones.

Jesus made the same point in Matthew's Gospel, stating that the way of His cross becomes our way as His disciples. Matthew 10: **"And whoever does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"** (10:38-39). In Matthew 16 Jesus said to Peter who had just rejected Jesus' suffering and death on the cross as necessary: **"You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."** Then Jesus told His disciples, **"If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"** (16:23-25).

We don't like crosses any more than Peter did. We do our best to avoid suffering and bearing crosses, but we can't be both a disciple of the Lord Jesus and a disciple of the world. To our shame, we often treat following Jesus as an inconvenience in our lives. It is not as though we have to sacrifice our lives in death as Christians; often we won't sacrifice big or small pleasures in our lives for Jesus' sake. It is actually the little things in life we won't consider giving up that define who our gods really are. Jesus' is calling us to repent of our sins of seeking the easy way of the world, seeking the world's glories.

A couple of Sundays ago we confirmed a group of our young people. Four years ago, the high school graduates we will recognize Sunday/today made the same promises: **P** Do you intend to hear the Word of God and receive the Lord's Supper faithfully? **R** *I do, by the grace of God.* **P** Do you intend to live according to the Word of God, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even to death? **R** *I do, by the grace of God.* **P** Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it? **R** *I do, by the grace of God.*

For some of our graduates and their families, it has been a struggle to keep these promises. God's grace has remained steadfast, but the doing has not. The devil is a great deceiver; the world offers many alternatives to following Jesus; our sinful flesh is weak, believing the lie that seeking what gives pleasure and feels good is most important. This is not just the problem of the young, but all of us. Jesus' cross was not easy or fun for Him, nor is it for us. We need to repent.

When Judas went out to betray Jesus for some money, Jesus said to those who believed in Him: **“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.”** To the little Church of disciples still gathered around Him at the table, He went on to say: **“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.”**

There is good news in these words. Betrayed by Judas, our sins and unbelief, Jesus' response is love. Jesus suffered and died for Judas who betrayed Him, for the ones who fled in fear at His arrest or ended up denying Him outright, and for us who continue to sin against Him and each other by refusing to take up His cross and follow Him. Being hated by the world did not stop Jesus from laying down His life on the cross to save sinners. Jesus has not stopped loving us.

I describe this as “glorifying love.” Jesus is glorified by dying for sinners He loves. His Father is glorified by Jesus doing this. Jesus had received the command from His heavenly Father to lay down His life and take it up again. His Father loves Him because He laid down His life on the cross as our Good Shepherd and took up His life again, rising from the dead. Doing that, Jesus proved His love for us and demonstrates why His Father loves Him (Jn 10:17-18).

Jesus commands us, His disciples, to love one another the same way He loves us: **“By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”** The Christian faith is like no other religion in the world. Jesus dying and rising for those who hate and don't believe in Him makes no sense to the world. Nor does us loving each other the same way He loves us make sense to the world. But when we practice the same glorifying love, the world will know we are Jesus' disciples. **“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.”** Amen.