

Fifth Sunday of Easter; May 18, 2025  
+ John 13:31-35 +  
“Jesus’ Love is His Glory – Your Love is, Too”

**After Judas left, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once.**

**“Dear children, I am going to be with you only a little while 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.**

**“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you are to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

The yellow lamp light flickered. Not a sound in that upper room. Jesus, basin in hands, towel around his waist, knelt on the floor at Peter’s feet. And the sight brought images to light in the shadows of Peter’s memory. Images of the dead boy, raised to life – Jesus’ powerful hand gently leading his to his mother’s again. Or of the endless bread from the baskets on the hillside – feeding hungry mouths – and how open-mouthed he kept looking back to Jesus, who was smiling, waiting as they kept on feeding the thousands. Of his master, the strong silhouette through sheets of rain, unflinching in the prow of the boat in the crashing spray and rolling thunder, stabs of lightning – and his clear strong word, “Be still...”, and then the suddenly glassy sea... Of fishing trips like that first one – every trip a record catch with Jesus – of hauling breaking nets into sinking boats. Storied years flickered in an instant’s flash. The kinds of things that had made Peter humbly say, **“Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”**

Is it perhaps these scenes in Peter’s memory that drove him to it? Peter said, **“Lord...you shall never wash my feet.”** If we take his words in the best way, I’d say it’s a humble thing. “Will you really wash my feet, Lord?” And he’d mean, “How could you, my powerful master, stoop to wash my sinful feet? No, no, no...You’re too glorious for that!” Which seems a noble and right sentiment. But the question is – is it really noble and right or does it really betray my sinful perspective instead? That right along with Peter I think it isn’t really glory for Jesus to love this way? “You’re too important to do this kind of loving, Jesus.” And if so, perhaps I ought to inquire a bit further: if I know how to say that certain things are fitting for Jesus to do in love, and certain things too low for Jesus to do in love... Do I make those same distinctions for myself too?

Really, you have to ask because this morning Jesus says, **“A new commandment I give you: Love one another.”** Now, that’s not really “new” as in “never before.” God had said it before; Jesus quoted it too: **“Love your neighbor as yourself.”** And that’s simple, isn’t it? It ought to lead us to only doing for others kind and good things; just as we would want ourselves. But how often have we asked the question instead? Instead of thinking about how to love someone as we love ourselves, how often don’t we end up just thinking about how much we love ourselves? Thinking of all you haven’t received and whether showing love to someone like this or that is really proper for you? You know how you want to be responded to at work – and thus, how you ought to respond to Charles’ snarky questions – still, sometimes you instead begin to calculate how you have been responded to and all you really want. And you say, “The guy who’s received that sort of treatment doesn’t need to stoop low for this person... Frankly, I don’t need anything from him. That kind of love won’t be very glorious.” This is the inversion we so often pull, do you know? You know just how you want enjoyment and fun for yourself. You think, though, when it’s time to hand the Xbox controller over to your friend, you think of how bush-campers took you out so quick the

last three rounds and you probably deserve to play another – just one – that would be right. And it feels glorious, really. Do you know this switch? Where you're tempted to love as you have been loved by others? Where the loving things you finally do are really things that will glorify you?

Notice how perfectly different Jesus is and how new his command to you and me truly is. John 13 is filled with beautiful and difficult things. Jesus washes his disciples' feet – beautiful but service unfit for Jesus the Master, we might say. As they eat he calls out his betrayer – one of his closest companions will hand him over to death – Jesus bids Judas to go and do it. And after our section, Jesus has the terrible conversation with Simon Peter about how he will deny the Lord too soon. And right in between those terrible things, Jesus says, **“Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him.”** Now is all the glory and the power and the majesty of the Son, of Jesus – when he's betrayed and denied! And his disciples don't get it. Now is the new command to love? Absolutely.

Because this is just how Jesus always spoke of his glory and his love together. Later with his disciples he prayed in the upper room: **“[Father] I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do...”** He meant “the work” of the Son of Man sent by the Father's love to love mankind all the way to the end. The work that demanded he be one with us in human nature, experience with us the sinful world, resist the temptations that knock us over, put himself under the holy law of God to be holy just as God demands, and not receive what he deserved but experience the shame and loss of betrayal and denial and mockery and death and worse. He meant that work he would accomplish when he subjected himself to **death, even death on a cross.**

Jesus' glory is to accomplish God's will; his good and gracious will for sinners. It is a kind of love that acts when there is no capability for us to return it; God's will to love, not his feeling of love. It is love that goes where we cannot. The disciples couldn't follow Jesus into heaven on their own glory – they couldn't even last the night. You and I cannot belong with God because of our ideas of love – most often we love ourselves. But **[Jesus] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.** Only Jesus could bring the perfect and make the payment and prepare this place in grace where we now stand – expectations to one day be with God in glory when he makes everything new and confidence that we are daily renewed in forgiveness and peace from all our sins.

In fact, that's the newness of his command, if you think about it. It isn't that Jesus is commanding you to imitate his love – that command is old. In another reading we heard today, Paul reminds you that you could move mountains or speak in tongues, give away all your possessions and plumb the depths of wisdom and knowledge – but they can all be for nothing – love isn't about fulfilling certain actions, following this one model, washing feet. No, Jesus invites his disciples to participate in his love. Later on, John will say in very similar language: **Beloved, I am not writing you a new commandment, but an old one, which you have had from the beginning. This commandment is the message you have heard. Then again, I am also writing you a new commandment, which is TRUE in [Jesus] and also in you. For the darkness is fading and the TRUE light is already shining...Whoever loves his brother remains in [this] light...** He means that we follow Jesus' command when we are in the new, beautiful, complete love of God that Jesus, the light of the world, accomplished in his saving work. This is God's message we have heard and believe. When our lives are in Jesus by faith, in his light, knowing his will and living it, then the defining characteristic of our love is that it is really his.

Which means, this is the glory of love: When we *willfully* choose to display patience and kindness, long-suffering and humility, in the face of anger and betrayals – when we exercise love – we aren't mainly imitating but manifesting. Jesus says, **“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”** Contrary to what Peter feared, when we are so confidently loved by our Lord that we can enjoy his promised glory for sure... And we confidently love in lowly things and hard circumstances, in everyday interactions and sometimes grand ways... It does bring glory – just not to us. No – as we serve others in love, it simply shows that we have been loved ourselves; that love is where we live. And it prompts others to ask from where this love we know came. And when they ask we have opportunity to say, “I learned it from my master, Jesus Christ, who always served me in the best way...do you know him?”

In this new day and every one after, may God bless you to know how he has made everything new in Christ, and show you new opportunities every day to share his love and bring glory to his name. I pray that God has used me over the past five years to help you know this new love of Christ and manifest in your life to his glory. God will supply every need we have, including yours for the next under-shepherd he has in mind for you. And Jesus will always supply you with his love, no matter who proclaims it. It is his glory to love you so deeply and thoroughly, and his glory again when you live in his love and willfully love the same way. Amen.