

# John 13:31–35

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     31 to 35. When he had gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified? And God is glorified in him.

If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you.

You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I am going, you cannot go. A new commandment I give you, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

You also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God. Well, good morning, everyone. And it's not lost on me that this Sunday, we are to normally be celebrating Ascension Sunday, the day in the church calendar, 40 years after Easter, where our Lord ascends into heaven and sits down upon his throne.

[ 1 : 1 7 ]     And it astonishes me that as we think about him reigning and ruling in heaven, we still are living here on earth.

And in the midst of our text itself, we have an indication that he is going to be leaving us and going to a place where we could not go. And yet he gives us directions for life while he is on his throne there.

Yes, he is in heaven, but we are here on earth. There are two words that I intend with this sermon to stand like men and show themselves.

Two words that this message will emphasize. And in one sense, two ideas that I hope you will take with you.

The words once stated and understood will serve a single aim. My aim this morning from the text before you is to let us all be reminded that the light of Jesus shines brightest on the darkest of nights.

[ 2 : 3 6 ]     The light of Christ shines brightest on the darkest of nights. The words are the words now and new.

I want to talk about the world as it is now. And I want to talk about what will be, what must be, in light of the world in which we live, something new.

These words are not emerging from my own mind as though they were things that I had processed in the week to give to you about the nowness of this evil day and the newness of our faith in Christ.

No, rather they emerge from the text itself. You can see them for yourself. They stand as sentinels grammatically in the emphatic position.

There's the word now in verse 31. When he had gone out, Jesus said now. And the word new, which we'll come to in a bit, verse 34, a new commandment.

[ 3 : 47 ] Let's begin with now. Notice that now stands between two things. One, Judas, who had gone out, it says, verse 31, or even before that, in the preceding context, he immediately went out and it was night.

We are to understand the going out of Judas as launching now. And yet, on the backside of now, we will see shortly a five-fold use of the word glory and the Son of Man being glorified.

So now is the center of gravity preceded by the fact that Judas had gone out and followed by the statement that Jesus will now be glorified.

Notice that the word now doesn't arrive until Judas had gone out.

This reference to Judas is indicated by the fact that he has just preceded us in the text by leaving the Lord's Supper, the Last Supper, to commence his betrayal of trust.

[ 5 : 14 ] That's what it was. It was a betrayal of trust. And it's positioned, notice John's language, indicating in verse 30, and it was night.

Judas' betrayal of trust, of our Lord, took place in the nowness of night. Evil done under the cover of darkness.

It's worth us asking the question, why would Judas commit this horrific act of betrayal?

betrayal? What is it that would make him have such disdain for the man, Jesus? What hatred is present in the heart of one who would commit this atrocity, this kiss upon the cheek, this feigning of love that would commence the killing of the son of man?

Now, we're not able to get into the mind of Judas entirely, but we know that at the last supper, it had so boiled up within him that when Jesus gave him the morsel of bread to eat, he eagerly took it, rose, and went out of disdain and hatred and being completely fed up with our Lord, that he would commence everything that would move him toward death.

[ 7 : 03 ] Let me say a few things about Judas and what the scriptures would say concerning his motivation. Judas had an irresistible appetite for power.

Judas had men that he hated. Judas had looked to Jesus to deliver him and those like him so that the oppressed!

would be able to overthrow the oppressor. Once the oppressor of Rome had been overthrown, Judas looked forward to his power in meeting out what he would call retributive justice on the world.

Yet, when he came to know that the message of Jesus was concerning a kingdom not of this world, and when it dawned on him, when the light bulb was turned on, when the penny dropped, that Jesus, while coming to bring in a kingdom and to overthrow a rule, meant the rule of the evil that existed in the world under the prince of darkness, grim, Judas roiled with disdain.

Not only that, we know from the scriptures that Judas enjoyed the place of privilege and thought nothing of pilfering the poor to his own benefit.

[ 8 : 39 ] It speaks clearly that this one who had an appetite for power and wanted a privileged seat at the table thought nothing other than the benefits that would be given to him upon the backs of the poor.

The scriptures tell us that while he kept the money that was meant for the poor, it fed his own appetite and his expenses. So what do we have with Judas?

We have the embodiment of a heart given over power to power, the enjoyment of privilege upon the back of the poor and a betrayal of trust that came through the sweet kiss upon a cheek.

These are the deeds done in a dark world and it is now, now, in light of all of that going out in the night that we come to Jesus' words.

Let's talk just for a moment about what we've seen. These deeds of Judas-like proportion, this disdain for others, this hatred of heart, who among us will be able to forget the images of the past week in which power and privilege, not through the kiss on a cheek, but through a knee on a neck, are able to take the life blood of a man.

[ 10 : 32 ] Such disdain, such evil, such hatred, it feels to me watching that this week again, that we have a betrayal of trust.

now I know that some of you will perhaps chafe at moving so quickly in the text from Judas' betrayal of Jesus to the officer and his betrayal of trust toward George Floyd.

You may say to me, but Pastor George Floyd is no Jesus. And yes, this is true. He is not. But my Jesus said, nevertheless, as much as you have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me.

And should you say to me, well, the least of these was reserved for those who we know are of the Lord, I would say, would you indeed place your judgment upon his soul, as one has already placed judgment upon his life?

Yes, let us say this with clarity and simplicity and force. We continue to live in the nowness of night.

[ 12 : 06 ] And while Jesus at Calvary dealt a death blow to the serpent, the tail is swinging wildly through the universe, destroying everything it can in its path.

The image for me of that betrayal of trust, that power and privilege upon the neck of the poor was almost visibly like the appearance of a rooster in a barnyard celebrating the capturing of a mouse under his own talon, head held high, back and spine erect, feathers planted into pocket, and for nine minutes, nine minutes, preening himself in the sight of all who would see what power unmitigated by the rule of law can do.

You know, if you travel this summer, if you go to South Dakota, you go to Colorado, you find yourself in Wyoming or Utah, you could attend a rodeo, and I will tell you that the care given to the beasts of burden in a rodeo is more humane than the care given to George Floyd in the past week.

I think of a cowboy leaving his horse in a run, chasing down a steer and wrestling it by sliding his right hand off the side saddle and around the neck until the left hand can grab hold of the face and pulling back, digging heels in the dirt until the steer falls on all fours and the cowboy immediately able to release his hands in victory.

More dignity, more care given to the young steer than was given George Floyd. George Floyd was a man.

[ 14 : 40 ] He was a man, not an animal. And for nine minutes it took for him to be treated in a way that does not befit the dignity of the human race.

I think again of the last line in the book of Jonah, if God sits in the heavens and cares ever so much about the cows and the beasts of burden, should he not care so much more for all of these?

Yes, there is something we need to look in the face today, that just as Judas betrayed his trust and delivered our Lord to Calvary, so too this world continues to be ruled by the prince of darkness and evil continues to roll, oftentimes seemingly without any end in sight.

And no wonder then we experience both righteous and unrighteous indignation fomenting forth. from our constituency.

This is our now. And for it we grieve, we lament, and we long for something different.

[ 16 : 13 ] We long, as Bing said in the opening, for God to act. And in our text, he does. because notice, the now precedes what Jesus has to say about the hour of his glory, and by that he means his death.

Let me read it for you. Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and glorify him at once.

It is as though the writer could not produce the word glory often enough before he came to the end of his thought. Five times over, the nowness of the night is what precipitates the explosiveness of his glory, this in breaking of light.

We know that glory is the imminence, the beauty, and the strength of an object. The stars and their shining are their glory, and now in the midst of the night, the darkest night, the evilest of the evilest of days, now is Christ glorified.

This one who John had told us was life, and that that life was the light of man, this one who John had indicated had come to shine in the darkness, this moral, corrupt universe in which we live, filled with its violence against one another, and its hatred against God, this light where Jesus said, I am the light of the world, and he says, I have come into the world that whoever believes in me would not walk in darkness.

[ 18 : 15 ] Let me put it to you simply as I can in the text. This nowness of his glory is immeasurably greater given the darkness of the hour.

Jesus shines brightest on the darkest of nights, and I hope that that will be some encouragement to us.

Think of it. only when the sun sets can the night sky be seen. The night must fall before the stars can shine.

It's not that the stars suddenly emerge because the night has come. No, they have been there all the time, but the light of the stars is not visible to the human eye because, one, the greater glory of the sun takes all of their imminence away, but also the lighter, dimmer lights of human glory and electricity and all the rest of it, they steal from us the light that is always there.

Imagine, if you could, just for a moment with me, God who sits in the heavens, who is pure and light, and you and I who dwell on the earth with all of our evil and our violence, and between the two is a thin, black cloth, a cloth of necessary separation between God and man.

[ 20 : 03 ] And when Jesus comes, when Jesus tabernacles among us, when he plunges from the threshold of heaven through that thin layer, that cloth of darkness, he cuts a hole into it and he emerges on earth as a shaft of light, penetrating for the first time something powerful enough to end the war between us and God.

God, and John has laid out these seven signs that Jesus did, each of them like pinpricks in the fabric above, wherein more light and more glory are shining forth from heaven onto earth that the evil might be overcome.

And now with the cross, now at this time there is this five-fold tearing of of that black garment that separates us from God, for in the cross the light of Christ is most fully known.

His death undoes our enmity. His shaft of light at Calvary now shines with more glory, and it shines with glory because we have looked the night in the eye and called it what it is.

Let me put it to you as simply as I can in human language. The cross is to our soul what the Milky Way is to our universe.

[ 21 : 42 ] It is the great splendor of glory. It is the one that undoes all betrayals of trust. It is what reconciles us to God and to one another.

Paul would write about this later in the book of Ephesians where he talks about the mystery of what occurs in Christ and the gospel. That mystery in chapter 1 verses 9 and 10 he says is part of the plan by which God will restore all things under Christ's rule.

He begins in chapter 1 verse 9 and 10 of Ephesians, things in heaven and things on earth. What the gospel does is it reunites heaven and earth which had long been at war with one another.

What Jesus does in accord with the plan of Christ in Ephesians 2 is to not only reunite us with the Father who is light and the forgiver of our sins, but he also indicates that the mystery, the plan of God is to reunite Jew and Gentile.

This dividing wall shall be broken down once and for all so that mankind, which is at war not only with God but with the rest of humanity, our own souls, which can find disdain for another and hatred, the gospel undoes this in Christ.

[ 23 : 24 ] And that is the mystery, that is the plan of God to bring together us before him as one family regardless of race or ethnic background.

Indeed, the book of Ephesians will go on to talk about these micro expressions of glory, not only in regard to heaven and earth, Jew and Gentile, you and me, black and white, but also man and woman, for this is the mystery that the man would leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, Ephesians 5.

The war between genders is undone through the explosive glory of the cross. Christ. When I think of that, when I think of that now, now is he glorified, I am convinced, I'm convinced that I can look the night in the face and grab hold of the glory at the cross of Christ and know God and love my neighbor.

Look at the text. One word now standing on its feet emphatically, that word now, followed in verse 34 by something he would give to us, namely something new.

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.

[ 25 : 20 ] Knowing that he would leave and be reunited with his father in heaven, the first thing on his mind in light of his own absence, is the protection of the church that they would love one another.

His leaving makes our loving so important. We are now to embody in this world what Jesus did in his life.

love. He who has reunited us with the father and taking our sins upon himself is the exemplar of how we are to love one another.

The newness of the night, overcome by the glory of the cross, now places in our hands the newness of the command to live with one another in love.

Let me just say two things about what is new here. How is it that this commandment is new? After all, haven't we read in Leviticus 19.18 that the summation of the entire law is to love your neighbor as yourself?

[ 26 : 49 ] how is it then that Jesus would indicate in light of his death we have something new in play? Well, of course, in 1 John 2, 7, and 8, the writer there will indicate it isn't new in one sense, it's always been there, but now the newness is related to the darkness is now passing away.

So it's new because in light of Christ's cross, the darkness which has held fast the world in sin and in sick misery now can be liberated through forgiveness and Christ and that darkness can begin passing away and it has to pass away in your own heart and in mind and it will evidence itself in love for one another.

Let me make two comments on that word. How is it new? First, by way of what it emphasizes, by way of emphasis. Notice, love one another.

He doesn't just recapitulate the Old Testament law that we are to love your neighbor as yourself. What's given here, particularly, the ethic that is intended is a Christian ethic of brotherly love, familial love, among the body of Christ.

The body of Christ is to be living with one another in love. If your brother is hurting, regardless of his station in life, you hurt.

[ 28 : 34 ] If your sister is grieving, you grieve. love. If your brother or sister has need, you meet it. You live sacrificially in light of this love. In other words, it's a love that is to exist in the church.

The church's love is a special love. because Christ has brought us together, this love goes way beyond race or gender.

This love is able to restore a marriage broken or a city torn by race. love.

This love means literally that we're not merely law keepers. In fact, we cannot keep the law. Love your neighbor as yourself in Leviticus 19 was heralded as those who were keeping the law.

[ 29 : 43 ] What Jesus says, and by way of its newness, isn't just that love because then it will show you're a law keeper. No, it's love that you will show yourself to be a Jesus follower.

Notice how the text works. It not only emphasizes the one another but it emphasizes who we are following.

Look at verse 35. By this all people, all people, it's not some, all people will know that you are my disciples.

So our love isn't just one of emphasis, brotherly love, familial love. Our love is one that signifies something different and in what it signifies, it is new.

Christians are not law keepers. Christians, by their love, demonstrate that they are Jesus followers. Let me put it to you this way.

[ 30 : 44 ] In our day, there is no greater need than for the church to be the church. church. The church needs to live out this newness of love.

The church itself is an apologetic. You know, we often think that we come together to get strengthened and then we go out to witness to our friends or to bear testimony to that which we believe, but the argument that Jesus would put forward here is that your life together is an apologetic, an argument, a defense, a witness, a testimony that you are my disciples.

And so, as we live with one another, so the world will know or the world will not know Jesus and his strength.

Let me say it to you as I should, as your pastor, our life together over the coming years is of utmost importance. And our life together needs to be marked by love.

What will this mean for us? Let me say on this Sunday, we will not be deterred. Christ Church, Chicago, will not be deterred in growing a multi-ethnic, multicultural family.

[ 32 : 14 ] on Chicago's South Side, comprised of men and women and children that hail from a number of ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Why? Because our context embeds people from all over the earth. And we will not be deterred to demonstrate that in one church, in one congregation, among one family, we will exhibit a love which the world can not seem to obtain.

We will work at knocking down all walls that divide, and we will build ourselves up in the love of Christ.

We will pray for it, we will plan for it, we will hire for it, we will give ourselves together in it. The stakes are that high.

For if we fail, if we fail as a congregation to exemplify the newness of his love in the newness of our night, then the world will not know of our Lord.

[ 33 : 35 ] as the church goes, so will go our city. Our Heavenly Father, as we look on this Sunday at this text, which begs us to remember that you are not with us, that you have left us, that you are in heaven above us, that you have returned to the glory that you had with your Father.

And we are here, Lord. We are on the earth. All too often our hearts are still too much of the earth. And in this day we have seen again the deeds of the darkest of nights, the betrayal of trust that fails to hold human life with the dignity that you have endowed it.

Lord, help us then to be encouraged that you shone yourself bright in just such a night.

And may our love for one another enlighten the day in which we live. And as we give ourselves to you, we pledge afresh to give ourselves to one another.

For indeed we want the world to know that we are your followers. In Christ's name I pray.  
Amen.

[ 35 : 20 ] Amen.