

John 13:31-35

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[0:00] Yes, Ife and Lisa and the boys are all recovering from COVID.! But I know that God is here.

And God is here, and God is glorified. But I want to ask you a question. If you made a birthday cake, and everybody was gathered around, and the candles were lighted, would you spend a lot of time telling everybody about how you messed up on making the cake?

No! Okay, here's my dilemma. We are in the Easter season in the church year, and we're all about Jesus being risen from the dead.

Why, in the Sunday liturgy, are we back at the Last Supper? Have you thought about that? The Last Supper was kind of a sad time, wasn't it?

Jesus knew where He was going. Well, I think the people that put, you know, there's a team that puts together what we call a lectionary, what scriptures we'll read each Sunday.

[1:39] And the neat thing about that is, I don't get stuck in preaching John 3.16 every week. I get to preach the scriptures that are assigned for that Sunday.

So we're going to talk about Jesus at the Last Supper, even though we're in a time when we're celebrating His resurrection. John's Gospel.

Now, first of all, before we talk about this particular passage, who do you think wrote John's Gospel? Probably John.

It doesn't claim in that Gospel that John wrote it, but as we put it together, we come up to this solution. John, the young apostle, wrote that down, and he wrote it years later.

And it's a beautiful way of sharing with us the Gospel of Christ. In fact, the Holy Spirit used the apostle John to touch you and to touch me.

[2:40] Because John explained just who Jesus is and why it was necessary for Jesus to be God and man together and to provide salvation for us through the cross.

So that's the... Jesus is God on a mission. God the missionary. God bringing eternal life to us.

And He's saving those who trust Him from the hell of meaninglessness, which is what we're kind of stuck in in American society today.

There's a way through. We're going to talk about that. So, today let's look at that Gospel lesson. It's John 13, 31 through 35.

If you've brought your Bible, you can turn to that. The Pew Bible, what's the page number? 1070. 1070. We're going to look at those five passages.

[3:48] Five verses. Now, when you look at it, it's very easy to break that five passages into three divisions, right?

We're going to do that today. 31 and 32 is the first division. Verse 33 is the second division. 34 and 35 are the third division.

That's where we're going today. So, let's look at division one. I'm going to read it. When Jesus had gone out, when Judas 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. Did you get glorified? Did you hear that? John, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is saying something kind of important to us.

To glorify, or the word glory, is one of the most important words in the Christian dictionary. Now, I don't usually use glorify when I go to the Walmart, but I certainly use it when I read the Bible and pray.

[5:01] To glorify someone is to set them on a pedestal. To pay them their true worth. Do you know, after the offering, every Sunday we sing something.

What do we sing? The doxology. Doxa. Guess what that is in Greek? Glory. So, when we bring our money offerings, when we bring our bread and our wine, as a special gift, this is kind of inherited from our Jewish heritage, when we bring these things forward to the Lord God, we do it to give Him glory.

In a lot of places, people raise their hand to give glory. It's funny about raising your hand. Different churchmanship have different ways of praising God with their hands, right?

If you're more Catholic, you do the sign of the cross. If you're charismatic, you raise your hand. If you're evangelical, you put your hands in your pocket because you don't want anyone to think you're charismatic.

Okay, so, glorifying God. That's our main purpose. And so, with these verses, when Judas had gone out, remember that?

[6:20] Judas, the betrayer, Judas Iscariot, Jesus gave him a piece of the bread, and He said, go and do what you've got to do. What was he going to do?

He's going to betray Jesus to the authorities so he would be arrested. Judas was a crooked disciple. He betrayed Jesus.

It says, when Judas went out, what does it say in that scripture? It was night. We go into the darkness, the spiritual darkness, and we are going to see terrible things happen to this man who is God in the flesh.

But what does Jesus do? When Judas had gone out, Jesus knew where he was going. Jesus said, now is the Son of Man glorified. And God is glorified in him.

Jesus knew the process. You know, we often like the finished product, and we don't care so much for the process. Have you noticed that?

[7:33] I mean, I like peanut butter. I don't care how it's made. I don't even care what ship brought it from wherever. I just like the finished product.

Well, Jesus knew what the product was going to be. And he knew the process as well. And so he said, that's glory.

God is glorified. God is going to glorify me and glorify humankind as they turn to me. So that's the first division.

We're setting the scene for what's going to come. setting the stage for the betrayal. But it's going to go to glorification.

And then, Jesus says something very puzzling. Verse 33. Little children. He starts with little children. Isn't that neat? Are these apostles seven years old?

[8:32] It was a term of endearment. Kind of like we would say to our child's son. Son. It's not meant son.

It's endearment. Son. So he says, little children, yet a little while I am with you. You'll seek me. And just as I said to the Jews, so now I say to you, where I am going you cannot come. It goes to patience. Don't you hate patience?

He's saying to them, have patience. I'm going to be with you for a little while, about 24 hours, maybe less.

Then you're not going to see me for a while. Just as I said to the Jews who want to harm me, you can't go where I'm going. Well, you can't go where I'm going.

[9:30] You won't see me. But, a new day is coming and you will. Have patience. In case you've been under a rock, we have been under a pandemic for several years.

And I think before it's all over, almost everybody will have caught COVID. Well, there was a plague in the 1600s where when you got sick you usually died. Over half the population of Europe died in that plague.

We had a plague in 1918 where a lot of people died. We are living through a plague now where a lot of people have died. It's going to end.

God's going to have victory. For those who love the Lord, whether I live or whether I die, I glorify God. I can't walk around deathly afraid.

So we're going to come out of this pandemic at some point. You know, most of us think we're already out of it. I don't know about that. But we're going to come out of that at some point.

[10:37] Have patience, Jesus says. Have patience. Be careful, but have patience. Just as He was speaking to those apostles that night, He speaks to us in our everyday issues.

Have patience. I will have victory. Which leads us to that last section. So what does that mean for us? He says in 34, 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. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. Now, 50 years ago, seems like yesterday, I was in seminary.

and I had been in the Navigators, so I had learned a lot of scripture. So I sat in class and this august professor came out and he said, you know, I want to let you in on something.

You know, they asked Carl Barth, what was the most profound thing in the Bible? and he said, Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so.

[11:53] Let me tell you, he said, Carl Barth was wrong. We sat there astonished.

He said, Jesus never told people he loved him in the Bible. You can't find it. I said, sir, in John, it says, a new commandment, love one another as I have loved you.

So the professor stared me down, this young marine upstart. He said, everybody knows Jesus never said that.

That was put on the lips of Jesus by the early church. Well, my hand went down. I didn't know what to say. It was new information to me. I didn't know that was what people believed.

And it took several days of processing and to realize the professor is out to lunch. He studied the wrong theology books. Jesus, in fact, said these words.

[13:05] A new commandment I give you. Now, if we look at the Old Testament, we see a lot of love in there. So what's Jesus talking about this new commandment that you love one another?

So, look at it. He explains it. Just as I have loved you, so love one another. That puts a whole new emphasis on it.

How did Jesus love? He went to the cross to show that love. His love was an act of caring. It was an act of self-sacrifice.

That's what we're called to in the whole thing of love. How we love one another. The other thing is Jesus is not talking about some kind of abstract concept called love.

He's talking about practical love in the Christian community. In this instance, he says, so you are to love one another.

[14:08] Now, I've been involved with all sizes of churches. From little teeny tiny to, I don't know, I don't even know all these people. I like small churches.

You know why? We have to be committed to one another. When we're not here, people notice. It's hard to be an anonymous Christian in a small church.

In fact, a small church, I believe, echoes the apostles, the early Christian community. We're called to love.

We're called to be committed to one another. When one hurts, we all hurt. Paul, would you read that scripture I asked you to read?

Sure. This is what love is about. This is from Romans. Romans chapter 8, beginning at verse 9.

[15:08] You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the spirit. If, in fact, the spirit of God dwells in you, anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

Thank you. This love comes not from me, it comes from the Holy Spirit. I can just live into that love and it will be reflected.

What did Jesus say? By this all shall know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. A great man named Tertullian, and I never lived next door to Tertullian, he lived around 250 in Africa, but he said something, he said, see how those Christians love one another.

That's often how the gospel is presented by acts of love on our part. A couple of just quick examples before we move off this beautiful gospel.

[16:33] Anybody heard of Ukraine? Yeah, okay, it's kind of been in the news lately, right? What's not so much in the news is about the neighbors of Ukraine, especially Poland, but all those countries except for Belarus, all those countries that surround Ukraine have reached out, most of them in Christian love, to care for them.

In Poland, many, many, millions are of Ukrainians are living in Poland right now, and they're living in your bedroom, if you're Polish.

It's such an incredible view of Jesus in the hearts and minds of these people. Another example, it's a foolish example, a friend has a garden, vegetable garden, garden, and last week the asparagus came up, and it looked so good, his mouth was watering, he was going to take it home, and he has a special way of cooking asparagus.

Well, his neighbor was out walking, and he said, Lord, you don't want me to do this, do you? He walked over to the neighbor and said, I just got my first batch of asparagus, you wouldn't want some, would you?

And the neighbor said, thanks so much, I love asparagus. That's the kind of self-love we can give. Little things, doesn't have to be a big thing, little acts of love, sometimes we call it random acts of kindness.

[18:21] That's how we are equipped to be able to speak of Jesus. And so, the bottom line is, this passage that was chosen is perfect to talk about the risen Lord Jesus Christ because it's in his resurrection that we find the love that he's had for us for years.

Let us pray. Lord God, we thank you that you would love us. Father, we thank you for sending Jesus. We accept him as our Lord and Savior, as our college said, the way, the truth, and the life. we put our lives in your hands, Lord, knowing that you can do more than we can either desire or pray. Bless us indeed, that we may be a blessing.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. And if our magic man can shut down the mic.