

“Love and Glory”  
Acts 11:1-18, Revelation 21:1-6;  
John 13:31-35

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It's always a little hard for me to follow up on the depth of sharing that comes with someone telling about their own story, and so the only place I can go is back to Jesus' story as it speaks to all of our stories.

As I think about the scripture for today, I'm just incredibly struck by the fact that Jesus is here telling Judas to “go on and do what you're going to do,”: and then he turns to his disciples and says, “Now I am glorified.” One of the worst things I can think of in our lives is that moment when we feel betrayed, and here is Jesus recognizing that Judas is betraying him and he turns and says, “Now God is glorified.” Maybe you can help me out with that. I struggle with understanding exactly what that means.

As I struggled with it, there were a variety of thoughts. First of all, what does it mean to glorify? Well, sometimes we say “no guts, no glory,” so is it just about forcing people to see the wonder of how good we are in some way? Jesus is certainly going to go on and show fortitude in the face of suffering, so is that what he's talking about? It doesn't quite feel like it to me. Now we are looking back at it through the resurrection so we see the victory that's coming as well. But he says it in the moment, “*Now* God has been glorified.” It doesn't seem to be just about the resurrection either, not about the victory.

As I wonder about that, I wonder what it means to glorify—to make manifest, to show the greatness. How is God's greatness shown in this betrayal and in what comes, the suffering and death of Jesus. It feels to me like what we see Jesus portray is the depth of God's love. So he's making manifest, he's showing the greatness of God's goodness, the greatness of God's love for us. Maybe that's why he can quickly turn from being glorified to talking about love.

But the interesting thing is, if you think about what “to glorify” means—to manifest, to acknowledge the goodness, the dignity, the worth, the value of another—and then look at what love means—to choose to see the goodness, the worth, the greatness, the value of another and care about them—it almost seems like they are two sides of the same coin. So perhaps when Jesus begins to talk to his disciples, then, he can move so quickly to talking about this new commandment he gives them to love one another. “Even as I have loved you, so should you love one another.” In that, we look and see the goodness, the value, the wonder of each child of God as he has seen it in us. Aren't we also, then, beginning to manifest the very goodness, the grace, of God? It is in our love for

one another that we glorify God. He says, in fact, that by the love we show we will be known as his followers.

It sometimes makes me wonder how well we're doing. Can folks in the world today see that by the very love we show in our life for one another that we are followers of Christ? Is that what the church is identified as in today's world?

What it makes me realize is that oftentimes I struggle with carrying out exactly what Jesus asked of us and of me. There are some times that I want a particular thing. I want to make sure that it happens that way. Sometimes I forget about the needs of the others, because I think this particular thing is what should happen.

Let's take an example. For example, if I decided that we should only sing from the 1650 Scottish Psalter I might have good reasons for that. I might see some really good theology there. They gave us a great gift, I might say. But in doing so, what would happen? Well, we couldn't have sung any of the hymns we sang today. We would miss all those good hymns, all the rest of the work that people have done ever since 1650. I would imagine that not everybody would see it the same way. Not everybody might appreciate what I'm seeing in that Psalter.

Now, I took that example at random, but you see how easy it is to think, "This is the way I want to do it," and try to get everybody else to fit into my mold. In some ways, I think what Jesus shows us is something very different. Instead of trying to mold everybody into the same shape, he sends Peter to see people who have no idea what it means to be Jewish. Peter learns it's not about us and them, and that they should simply do it our way, but that the love of God is for all folks.

God invites all of us, for example, to be around the table. It is in the invitation to be around this table, the Lord's table, that he shows us the very thing he is talking about—the way of God's love inviting us all to be part of the family of faith.

Perhaps, as we see Peter learning about it, as we hear Jesus calling us to love one another even as he has loved us, we can begin to see that we become an invitation. When we feel loved, we feel the warmth, we feel accepted, there's a certain invitation in that. As Peter went and gave the word to those in Joppa, there was an invitation in his words. When we're invited to love one another even as Jesus has loved us, as people see that love in us, that's an invitation for others to know that love. It's an invitation to gather around and be the family of God, the children of God gathered around the same table. And in living out that invitation—the loving of others as Jesus has loved us—we also end up glorifying God, showing the greatness of God, making it clear in our lives who God is. We get to be God's invitation to the world, to invite all to to know the wonder of God's love. Amen.