

JESUS IS GLORIFIED BY HIS POWERFUL LOVE
JOHN 13:31-35 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER APR 24, 2016

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him." ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. ³³ 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 come.' 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. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

When products are advertised as "new and improved,"
the suggestion is that new is better.

What is new always catches our attention and interest,
but what is new, the news, is not always good at all.

What makes the news is what is surprising, unexpected.
What is normal & happens all the time is not news.

Today's readings tell about the good news of the gospel
which is truly good
and which Jesus in text says is related to three things
that are unique and new.

THE GLORY OF JESUS' LIVING LOVE IS GOOD NEWS
so WE GLORIFY JESUS BY A NEW, LOVING WAY OF LIFE
as JESUS' LOVE GLORIFIES US WITH A NEW KIND OF LIFE

THE GLORY OF JESUS' LIVING LOVE IS GOOD NEWS

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him." ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.

When an illusionist performs an amazing escape
he will not just show you his coming out of a box
but will first show you his being chained up and locked in.
That is what makes it amazing.

This is like when Jesus says he is about to be glorified.

Text begins with words "When he had gone out,"

The "he" is Judas, who was about to betray him.
Jesus was about to be arrested, condemned and killed.

How is this glorious and how is God glorified by this?

It is because this is the first part of his resurrection.

His being alive several days later is amazingly glorious
only because before he had died and was buried.
But Jesus glory is not just in what he did but what he did for us.
This was an act of amazing love.
When Jesus spoke and fulfilled these words
he knew he was being betrayed and abandoned
by those he had cared for and loved the most
but, amazingly, he keeps on loving and even dying for them.
God is glorified by this amazing act of love.
This is the gloriously good news of the Gospel,
that God continues to love such undeserving sinners
as us who continually go our own selfish way
and fail to love and obey him;
and that Jesus willingly suffers and dies in our place,
taking on himself the suffering that we deserve
so that we end up free and forgiven.
and that he is then raised to new life
so that we can know this is true and have faith in him
and continue to receive his love.
So both Jesus' being transformed to life again after death
and his loving the unlovely glorifies him and the Father
as it also makes a difference for us;
and one difference it makes for us is that now
we too glorify Jesus and the Father
by an amazing change that happens for us.

WE GLORIFY JESUS BY A NEW, LOVING WAY OF LIFE

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. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Here is another statement that is curious.

Jesus says his new commandment is to love one another.

How is that new? The Bible has said it plenty of times.

What the Bible says in other places is

"Love your neighbor as yourself." That fulfills the whole law.

But here Jesus says to love others as HE loves us.

That results only from the gospel.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus comments:

it is said love your neighbor - and hate your enemies.

But he says love even your enemies.

Even pagans love those who love them,
there is nothing special about that.

Love means wanting what is good for another
as much as or more than we want good for ourselves.

What do we want for self? Comfort, pleasure, strength,
freedom. Not anything that holds us too tight
or challenges us with what is difficult,
and so we tend to love others this way.

But Jesus' love for us is stronger. What he wants for us is
not just pleasure but perfection, not just health but holiness,
not just strength but submission & total reliance on him.

He loves those who don't want his love or attention.
He reaches out to those who don't want his embrace.

His tough love wants what is best for us and is willing
to endure discomfort on both sides in order to get there.

This is the kind of love Jesus wants us to have
for one another and also for outsiders.

Peter gives an example of this in the first reading.
he goes out of his comfort zone to do something
new and strange, sharing God's love with gentiles.

And the others recognize this is God's way of doing things.

Jesus glorifies the Father by what he does in love
and we glorify him in the same way.

We are to let our light shine before men
that they may see our good works and glorify
(not us, but) our Father in heaven.

Too often the way we get along with even fellow believers
does not make either us or God look good.

But when we do love in this way it is real news
because it is an unusual kind of love
that comes only from the work of Jesus himself.

One of the things that is new about this commandment
is not just the results on the outside, loving others,
but what motivates and causes it on the inside.

Some are old enough to remember invention
of a new way of cooking: the microwave oven.
The food may look about the same on outside

but it is cooked in a new way, from the inside.

What causes us to keep the commandment of love
is not the old "I have to" of living under external law
but a new internal "I want to" that comes from gospel.

This new way of life happens only when...

JESUS' LOVE GLORIFIES US WITH A NEW KIND OF LIFE

³³ 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 come.'

This is a surprising saying too, at least to Peter, who replies,

"Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."

So where is it Jesus is going?

Right now he is going to be betrayed and arrested,
and he is going to accept it meekly.

He is going to be scorned by those who are worse
and beaten by those who are weaker
but he is going to endure it patiently.

He is going to die the most shameful & miserable death
while carrying all the sins of the whole world
and experiencing the aloneness of hell
but he is going to do it with gentle strength.

Can any disciples do this? No, we can't begin to go there.

But there is another reason we can't.

When a parent is going to the store and child says,
"Can I go to?" and parent says "no."
It means not that they are not able but not allowed.

When Jesus goes to suffer to pay for every sin,
to face the horrors of death & the devil alone
he says to us, I am not going to allow you to go there,
I am going to keep you from this.

But there is somewhere he is going that we will go afterward,
because of what he does, we will follow him
because he will carve out a space in suffering
in which we can still be safe,

He will make a hole in death through which we can pass.
He will defeat the Devil so we can walk by him.

We will follow not by doing the same things he does
but through faith in what he has done for us.

He is going to live again forever & ascend to glory in heaven.
This is where we follow him because he gives us
a new kind of life.

When God created the world, he made different kinds of life.

He created plants that are alive
but also animals that are alive in a different way.
Sometimes when people have catastrophic injury,
hospitals can artificially do work of heart, lungs,
use i.v.s, kidney machines to keep them alive,
but when brain is dead, it is said it is not real human life
but are like vegetables.

But God made people to be alive in a way
that not even other animals are, spiritually alive.

The fall into sin caused a catastrophic spiritual injury
so that people can still think and act on their own,
deciding and doing things people do
but they are not really alive but spiritually dead.

What Jesus does is miraculously bring us back to life again,
not just physical life, and not just after we die,
but full spiritual life that he gives us now
and that lasts forever without dying.

Notice that in v. 33, Jesus calls the disciples "little children."
This is because, as Jesus says in reading from Revelation,
he makes us God's sons.

It is because we are made reborn children of God
that we can live the way we do now
and that we will live as we will in heaven.

In reading from Revelation, Jesus declares,
"I am making all things new"
He is doing it already now, giving us spiritual life
that glorifies him by the love he gives us for others
and he will keep on doing it until he gives us glory in heaven.
This kind of new is truly good.

THE GLORY OF JESUS' LIVING LOVE IS GOOD NEWS
His glorious living is surprising news because he died
and is good news for us because he did it for sinners.

WE GLORIFY JESUS BY A NEW, LOVING WAY OF LIFE
It is a surprising new kind of love even for enemies
and glorifies Jesus because it comes from his love for us.

JESUS' LOVE GLORIFIES US WITH A NEW KIND OF LIFE
This is surprising news because we are such sinners
but through faith Jesus leads us where
we cannot go on our own,
every day here on earth and forever in heaven.