

5th Sunday of Easter
May 18, 2025
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
We Live Lives of Lavish Love

John 13:31-35 (EHV)

After Judas left, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³²If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once.”

³³“Dear children, I am going to be with you only a little 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.

³⁴“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you are to love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Dear Friends in Christ,

“Love one another” is something almost everyone in the world could agree is a good moral or religious way to live. If we just love one another, there would be peace between Iowa and Iowa State fans. If we just love one another, there would be harmony among Democrats and Republicans. If we just love one another, the Christian denominations of the world would unite. If we just love one another, nations would not train for war anymore but would beat their swords into plowshares. Love is all we need to make this world into paradise.

But what is love in such examples? Is it a warm, fuzzy feeling between opposing sports teams no matter who wins the Cy-Hawk trophy? Is it agreement on policy between political opponents? Is love compromising doctrinal differences between denominations? Does this kind of love ignore the sinful heart of man that is willing to use the sword to get the power and wealth of the neighboring group? When the world takes up Jesus’ new command to love one another, it assigns to this love goals which cannot be accomplished by worldly love. The love Christ demonstrates and commands of his followers is not the warm, fuzzy, nebulous feeling of niceness towards someone else. Christ’s love is real and active. His love glorifies his Father. Our lives of love are to follow Christ’s pattern.

To understand Christ’s command to love one another, it helps to know the context of this discussion. It is Passover, Maundy Thursday. Jesus has washed his disciples’ feet. Love is humble service. Then Jesus tells them that one of the disciples will betray him. He dipped the bread in the dish and gave it to Judas, identifying him as the betrayer. Then we hear the words of our text for today:

After Judas left, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³²If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once.”

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And right after these words, Jesus tells Peter, “The rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.” So, Jesus gives an example of love by washing their feet, gives a warning to Judas before the betrayal, gives the command to love one another, and gives a warning to Peter about his future denials of Christ. The love Jesus is talking about and demonstrating is not a love that makes sure everyone is having a good time at the Passover party. Instead, his love is for his Father and for all, including Judas and Peter.

Judas is about to hand Jesus over to the chief priests for a measly 30 pieces of silver. Jesus loves him enough to give Judas a chance to repent. Jesus will do so again in Gethsemane when Judas arrives with the temple guards as he asked, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48).

Christ also loved Peter by warning him. Peter was such an eager follower of Jesus. He was the student who wanted to answer every question. He wanted to please his teacher. He was engaged with every lesson, passionate about following Jesus even to death. Peter claimed that even if all the rest fell away, he never would. Jesus could have loved Peter by telling him, "That's great Peter. Keep up that positive attitude!" But that would not have been love, to build Peter up in his self-confidence. Instead, Jesus loves Peter by warning him that he is not as strong as he thinks and that he will deny Christ three times before the morning.

The love Jesus calls for is to love as he loves. We have not done so. Think of the second reading for today. It is often and rightly used for weddings. It is all about love. And those getting married might be under the spell of romantic love and actually believe they do love like this. But the reality is that we sinners often fail to love as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13:

Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy. It does not brag. It is not arrogant. ⁵It does not behave indecently. It is not selfish. It is not irritable. It does not keep a record of wrongs. ⁶It does not rejoice over unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things

Lord, have mercy upon us for we have not loved like Jesus who humbled washed feet. We have not always loved those who are different from us. We have certainly not always loved as instructed in 1 Corinthians 13. But we have a Savior in Jesus who loves perfectly. Listen to the opening verses of our text again.

After Judas left, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³²If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once."

Christ knows that Judas is going to meet the chief priests. He knows that they will arrest him in Gethsemane at night when no crowds are present. He knows that they will mock him and bring false witnesses against him before the high priest. He knows they will mistreat him and hand him over to Pilate. Christ knows how the Roman soldiers will flog him, beat him, mock him and beat a crown of thorns into his head. He knows that he will fall under the weight of the cross he is made to carry. Jesus knows that less than 24 hours from now, the soldier will drive nails through his hands and feet and lift him up on a cross to be displayed before all who walk by. He knows that he will be dead by the next evening. The eternal Lord God had planned this from eternity, but in time, when Judas left the upper room, the pieces were all set in motion for the next excruciating 24 hours.

And how does Jesus describe this? Glorious! "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him." Jesus believes this is good. He truly loves his Father so that he is eager and passionate to go to the cross and suffer and die. We cannot follow Jesus in this glory. Only the Son of God and Son of Man can put his love into action and pay for the sin of the world. Only Jesus can glorify his Father by completing the plan to forgive sinners by the death of God's Son on the cross. Only Jesus can finish the plan of salvation by his sacrificial death. And Jesus was eager and willing to glorify his Father by going to the cross. "This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

To the world, the cross is in no way glorious. But for Christ it was glorious because he was able to carry out the salvation of sinners. For us, the cross of Christ is glorious because we are forgiven through his precious blood, shed on the cross. We have peace with God through the wounds he suffered. We will live in the glory of heaven and in the glory of the Triune God forever because of the glory Christ achieved at the cross. His unconditional and undeserved love for the world is unmatched by any love we demonstrate.

However, his great love for us compels us to be eager to do what he commands:

"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you are to love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

This command is not new in that it was never given before. But it is new in that we who have received Christ's forgiveness have a new way to love and motivation to love. We love as Jesus loved us. He loved us for our eternal good and for the glory of his Father. Therefore, we love others for their eternal good and to glorify God, our Savior. Our prayer is that the person God puts in our lives sees the love of Christ on display and even though they do not believe, they see that our love is different from the world. Perhaps they will want to know more about this unconditional love for all people. Perhaps you will be given the opportunity to glorify Jesus by telling them about the only perfect and complete love in this world, the love of Christ. And if you never get to experience the joy of someone asking more about the love of Christ shown by you, continue to glorify your Savior by doing so. It is not up to us to save someone. Jesus already did everything to save everyone. We get to live lives of lavish love in thanks to our glorious Savior and leave the results up to him.

Amen.