

You Will Know Us By Our Love

Acts 11:1-18

Psalm 148

Revelation 21:1-6

John 13:31-35

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

If you **were** among the 20 that were here last Wednesday, I say my apologies already, because some of this is repetitious. If you **weren't** among the 20, you missed a really good night! Miracles occurred! We talked about politics and religion at one time and place and there were no fisticuffs! I believe it is because we take very much to heart Jesus' above mentioned "new" commandment, to love one another. And yet, I know we don't love each other because of Christ's new commandment – we do it because we can't help ourselves! We can do no other.

We are a small congregation. That can seem, at times, like a disadvantage. We don't have the resources larger churches have, like people, money, programs and equipment. It may even sometimes feel like we may be doing something wrong – as if numbers are a determining factor on the quality of our love and service. But we know that size is not a determining factor on how good we are at loving God.

In fact, I believe we have an advantage because we are small! The advantage is that we can know about each other and care for each other and truly love each other. We have an overview of each other, and yet we are relaxed and welcoming to newcomers, because we are *home*. We in this congregation may be very different, but we gather around this table at 9 am literally – and we stand with each other at 11 am - and we know we are part of each other's spiritual experience.

You can't be a part of any worship experience and not be a part of the most intimate experience of the lives of everyone here. When we gather to sing, pray and listen, we feel the intimacy of the experience ourselves, but it feels all the more intense because we are sharing and participating in our neighbor's experience with God as well! The sacred moments shared here are shared with each other, God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit!

It is a golden opportunity to reach beyond ourselves and feel the forgiveness and love around us. You can get lost in crowds - here, you can't get overlooked! Even if you wanted to! And that *is* a good thing. It can be a frightening thing – but if you can learn to trust it, and enjoy it – it can be so enriching.

Jesus had only 12 at the table on the Passover night at which this scripture takes place. There were plenty of women fussing around, and some argue that the women disciples were overlooked, but the tradition we have been dealing with over the centuries of faith claim that this Passover was only for the 12 male Disciples to share. Traditionally Passover was a family experience. The various members had their rolls to play, and the father had his. So it is no surprise that at one point in our text we hear Jesus calling the grown men there, "Children". It was a term of endearment found only here in all the gospels. It reflects the intimacy and intensity of relationship unlike in other places.

These 4 verses are considered to be the introduction to Division 1 of "The Last Discourse" of Jesus – which goes from 13:31 through 17:26, with some occasional short interruptions. This is considered by

some to be one of the greatest compositions in all religious literature. These words were spoken at the end of the Passover meal, right after Jesus told Judas to go and do what he needed to do, and then Judas left to betray Jesus. And in a way, these 4 verses summarize the entire discourse.

Judas leaves, and it is as if Jesus wants to share with the Disciples *what* they will need to know *after* the whole drama which is about to unfold, is over. God and Jesus' "*glorification*" is the goal of the whole experience. He sits at the table, where they have been remembering the time that God saved their forbearers from the death of their first born male children, and tells those in the room, "**Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him.**"

Judas left to betray Jesus, and Jesus knows what is going to happen next. He knows that the disciples are going to be confused and scatter like lost lambs, so he tells them the end of the story before they have even gotten to the scary part yet! It is like jumping to the last pages of the mystery novel to find out 'whodunit' from somewhere in the middle of the book.

Because of the actions which will take place, the Son of Man – the one who was born as a human – will be glorified. Jesus – son of Mary, will (and here come the dictionary definitions): 1.) be treated as being more splendid, excellent, than would normally be considered; 2.) will be honored with praise, admiration, or worship; be extolled. 3.) be praising the glory of (God), esp. as an act of worship.

Jesus will be shown to be more than just a regular human being – there is something magnificent about him. And the reason that this can be so is (as Jesus has always said throughout his ministry) – is because of His Father – our God is also something magnificent, excellent, superb and wonderful. "**If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.**" Jesus and God will both be shown to be one and be marvelous. That is what it is all about.

Sometimes I think I don't dwell on that thought enough. The word "God" already seems synonymous with "glorify" and all those other words from the previous paragraph. The disciples had already been glorifying God because they were thankful for the Passover – they were already aware of the superior aspects of God. Why repeat this?

One, because this was the clearest joining together of who Jesus was as being the Messiah - with the connection through Passover and the relationship with God. And two, because they were about to have everything that they believed all mixed up and turned around. They needed to be reminded in advance with the hope that they will remember it later.

Glorifying – Jesus and God – Jesus points out that because of what is about to happen, he and God will be shown to be amazing, and this Son of Man and Son of God is asking the Disciples – and therefore we, too – to love one another. Because that is what is so extraordinary about our God – love. How God reaches out to show love for us, through grace and forgiveness and miracles. "**I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**"

Just as Jesus loves, we are to love each other. I cannot imagine the *glorious* Jesus being able to love anyone in anyway other than gloriously. God has shared his love with humanity, by sharing his son. And that is what we are asked to do, too – share the sacrificial love – the limitless love of Jesus Christ.

Luke 6.35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the ...wicked. Proverbs 31:8 we are asked to "Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute." Which destitute people? Who are they today? Who are our brothers and sisters? Are we their keepers? Who is our neighbor? Shall we ask the Samaritan? Where do we put the limit for the glorious love of God that Jesus is asking us to share? "**By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**" This means Everyone.