

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fourth Sunday after Easter, May 22, 2011

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Lessons: Isaiah 62:11 – 63:10, 1 John 1:8 – 2:12, John 17:1-17.
Sermon Text: John 13:31-35
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

When you hear the word “glorified”, you probably think of “honored”, “praised”, and those kinds of grand things. Doesn’t it seem strange that Jesus says, on the same night in which he was betrayed, *“Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once”*?

Jesus was celebrating the Passover with his disciples, the Passover that will turn out to be the Last Passover and the First Lord’s Supper. Judas has just left the room to meet with the leaders of the Jews to betray Jesus to them. Jesus knows that in the next 24 hours he will be crucified, dead and even buried. And yet he speaks of being glorified? What a strange-seeming contradiction. He is about to suffer the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of all mankind: the mental, spiritual, and physical anguish of being forsaken, abandoned by God so that mankind need never be forsaken by God.

And so how is it that he can tell us that

JESUS IS GLORIFIED THROUGH HIS CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH

- 1. He said these words on the same night in which he was betrayed!**
- 2. He is going to suffer for the sins of the world – a strange way to be glorified!**
- 3. His children are to love one another as a reflection of his love for them.**

John often does not repeat what is recorded by the other evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke. That is especially true of the night in which Jesus was betrayed, the day we call Maundy Thursday. But he does tell us much about what Jesus tells his disciples in that upper room before he goes out to suffer and die. Wait a minute. Didn’t he just say he is about to be glorified? But you know he is about to go to suffer, be crucified because of sin. How can that be? Isn’t there a contradiction there?

With the departure of Judas Iscariot from the upper room, and the events to follow, it was time for the Son of Man and Son of God to be glorified. But it was also time for him to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men to be tortured and crucified and killed.

So today we must first of all remember why Jesus came into the world. Earlier in his gospel, John wrote *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* John 1:14. That is plainly talking about Jesus Christ, and John states that he had seen Jesus’ glory.

God sent his Son into the world to become a man – as man was created to be – without sin. As the Son of Man and the Son of God, he was to take the place of sinful man and make the sacrifice for all sins. In that lay his glory and the glory of God who sent him.

No sooner had Judas left the room than Jesus turned to His disciples with a series of beautiful, comforting sayings. They needed strength and consolation for the time of tribulation that would soon come upon them. Tonight is the last time they would get to listen to him until after he was raised from the dead. They probably didn’t realize it, but probably all thought that things would continue as they had been – he would teach, and perform miracles. But he is about to be betrayed, tried by a religious court and then a secular court, and sentenced to die – to be executed on a cross.

But despite this impending betrayal and suffering and death, there is a note of triumph in the words of Jesus. In this crisis, by this decision of Jesus, the first step in His glorification has been accomplished. It is the Son of Man, the God-man, who has been glorified through all the miracles of His life, and who is now to be glorified through the greatest miracle of all, following His death and burial. That greatest miracle, of course, is his resurrection from the dead, coming back to life after his crucifixion.

To glorify means to make glorious by bestowing honor and praise.

Although it might seem strange to speak of Christ being glorified in connection with the treacherous betrayal by Judas, that was the path of glory for Jesus. Only in and through the crucified Christ can any of us see God's glory and give God glory. The crucifixion itself would obscure the glory only for a time. At the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, God would bring all his glory to our attention in his Son.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to accomplish his work. His son, true God, was born in a stable and laid in a manger. His son was raised by a simple family headed by Joseph, a carpenter, in a humble, despised place: Nazareth. God could have saved the world in some other spectacular way. But he chose a crucifixion, a despised death on a wooden cross to save the world. Then that message was presented, not through spectacular appearances of angels to all mankind, but through the simplicity of preaching, of proclaiming, of telling of the facts. Paul writing by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, tells us, for instance in 1 Corinthians 1:20-21: ***"Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."***

And it is in his being taken prisoner and put on trial – the shameful treatment by the very people Jesus was sent to first – the Jews, that God chose to save mankind from their sins.

God is glorified in the Son. It is God's salvation. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. God the Father would be the Cause and the Promoter of His glorification, which was also bound to result in the Father's glorification as well. The Son having accomplished the work of salvation, the Father would receive the honor and glory for the resulting benefit for the whole world. But so close is the union between the Father and the Son that there is a mutual exchange of honor and glory between the two. That Jesus was glorified according to His human nature, that His human nature was received into the full enjoyment of the divine essence and attributes, is an event which happens within the essence of God. This act of glorification began quickly. It has its next stage taking place that very night. The Lord tells and shows His disciples what relation this fact would have to them and their faith. Affectionately He calls them ***"little children"*** (verse 33 in the King James Version). He would be with them only a little while. The time could be numbered by hours now rather than by days. Then He would be taken from them and they would not see him for three days. He would not be with them for that time, and they could not at this time follow him into the grave. This was a drastic change from the intimate relationship which they had now enjoyed for some three years.

Only a little time remained before Jesus would leave the disciples. He called them his children. This echoes what we read in Galatians 3:26-27: ***"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."***

They were as dear to him as children, and they as yet had only a childlike understanding of what was to come.

Jesus had to leave them, and they couldn't follow. Several months earlier, he said the same thing to the unbelieving Jews. ***"Jesus said, 'I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.'"*** John 7:33-34 The Jews didn't understand at all what he meant. He had told the Jews that they would seek Him after it was too late, after all their searching for false Messiahs had been fruitless. In a similar manner He here tells the disciples that they will seek Him. Their separation from their Lord would be a severe blow for them. But instead of abandoning hope, they should take heart, though they cannot follow Him now, at once. There is work for them to do before they may follow Him into the Kingdom of Glory. The necessity for true, fervent brotherly love became apparent that night. They had known before that they should love all men as their neighbors; but here they are given a new commandment, that is, a fresh command that they should love one another. It was a kind of love which had

not been practiced much up to that time, and is practiced all too seldom in our days. The manifestation of this kind of brotherly love should be a sign, so that the people in the world in general might at all times recognize those who believe and practice fruits of faith as His disciples. The standard of this love, as the most beautiful ideal in all the world, is the love of Jesus to them, and to His disciples of all times. The climax and consummation of His love came with His giving His life as a ransom for mankind. Of course, only those who accept that in faith benefit from this tremendous gift. Love is the ideal which should always be present in the minds of all Christians, that everyone deny himself in the interest of brotherly love. Not only should this be in the minds of Christians, but it should also be practiced, exercised by those who believe in Christ. When the Christians love one another fervently, with pure hearts, even unto death, then it will fully become obvious that they are disciples of the Son of Man who laid down His life for His sheep, and who became, by dying, a ransom for all.

His disciples didn't understand either, at this time. It would take until after the resurrection, and even after the ascension, when the Holy Ghost would come upon them that some of them would understand.

The unbelieving Jews, however, would be separated from him forever by their unbelief. The disciples would only be separated physically for the time being. What Jesus had to do now, he had to do alone, as you heard in our Old Testament lesson: ***“I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing.”*** Isaiah 63:3.

As a parting legacy, Jesus gave his disciples a “new old” command. Moses had told the people already that Jehovah required them to love your neighbor as yourself. We read, for example, in Leviticus 19:18 ***“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”***

The word “new” here means “fresh” and having new quality. Jesus' command was to love one another as he had loved them. From that night on, Jesus' disciples were to practice love in the light of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. That love is the greatest kind of love. It is called agape. (uh-`ga-pay) It is the kind of love that sacrifices for others. How will people know we are disciples of Christ? We will practice that kind of love for one another. John, especially in his three letters as well as in his Gospel, emphasizes this again and again. One tiny example is found in John 15:17 ***“This is my command: Love each other.”***

Just as the moon has no light in itself, but reflects only light from the sun, so the Christian in all his love is reflecting the love of God which has been shown in his life. It is this love which is the motivation for all the Christian does. And in our fruits of faith, the love we show one another, we see the glory of God, and we glorify God. ***“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”*** 1 Corinthians 10:31 It is a strange way in which God is glorified in Jesus' sufferings and death. But it is all looking forward to Jesus' resurrection from the dead. And it is due to God's working his glory in us that we can sing

“All glory be to God on high,
Who hath our race befriended!
To us no harm shall now come nigh,
The strife at last is ended;
God showeth His good will to men,
And peace shall reign on earth again;
Oh, thank Him for His goodness!” Amen.
(The Lutheran Hymnal 237:1)