

5 Easter (C)

Jn 13.31-35

Is it any wonder the disciples were confused? “If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.” What does that mean, exactly? And does it have anything to do with the “new commandment” Jesus gives his disciples?

There are actually two problems here. The first problem has to do with all the pronouns floating around that sentence: “If God has been glorified in *him*, God will also glorify *him* in *himself* and will glorify *him* at once.” Who are all the “hims” to whom Jesus keeps referring?

Grammatically speaking, there’s more than one right way to read that sentence; maybe some of the “hims” refer to the Son of Man, maybe some of the “hims” refer to God. So we’ve got to figure out the one to whom these pronouns refer.

The second problem here has to do with how exactly God’s glory will be manifest. “God will glorify him ... and will glorify him at once.” What are we talking about here? How is that glory going to be revealed? And does any of this have anything to do with this “new commandment” Jesus gives to his disciples? How does all of this hang together? Is it any wonder the disciples were confused?

Thankfully, this isn’t as tricky as it sounds...but then, we have the distinct advantage of living on *this* side of the resurrection. Prior to the resurrection, this would have been a real challenge. But in light of the resurrection, a lot of pieces fall into place.

So let’s look at all the “hims” in this somewhat cryptic little saying: “If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.” Most of the “hims” refer to the same person: the Son of Man, Jesus. So a more straightforward way of reading this passage would be to read it as saying, “If God has been glorified in the Son of Man, God will also glorify the Son of Man in God and will glorify the Son of Man at once.” Jesus had devoted his life to the glorification of God, and now God was about to do the same for Jesus.

So if Jesus is the one in whom God has been glorified and the one in whom God will be glorified “at once,” what does that refer to? What is Jesus talking about? Is he talking about the cross and the glory that will be revealed when the Son of Man surrenders his life in perfect obedience to his Father? Yes, that’s one way of reading this passage.

Is he perhaps also talking about the resurrection and the glory that will be revealed when the Son of Man is raised from the dead by the Father? Yes, that is also a legitimate way of reading this passage.

Is he perhaps also talking about the ascension and the glory that will be revealed when the Son of Man returns to the Father and is granted authority over all things? One more time, yes again.

It’s not necessarily any one of these events that’s going to demonstrate the glory of God in the Son of Man; it’s *all* of these events together. Through his death, his resurrection, and his

ascension to the Father, the Son of Man is going to be glorified in a new and altogether extraordinary way.

Throughout the gospel of John, Jesus constantly refers to his dependence on his Father. “The words I speak are not my own, they are my Father’s. The deeds I do are not my own, they are my Father’s. The life I live is not my own, it has been given to me by my Father. The Father has given all things to me. If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.” Jesus repeatedly made it clear that he did not consider his ministry, he did not even consider his *life*, to be his own. He was doing his Father’s will.

So his whole ministry was a manifestation of God’s glory. When people were healed, when the gospel was preached, when repentant sinners received forgiveness, all of these things served as signs that the glory of the Lord was coming into the world.

“But wait a minute,” Jesus says to his disciples, “you haven’t seen anything yet. The Son of Man is about to be glorified in a new and even more remarkable way, and when that happens the glory of God will be manifest in the world in an even more profound way. The Son of Man is about to be vindicated, and his vindication will be a sign that God has entrusted all things to him, both things in heaven and things on earth.”

Now, here’s the really remarkable thing about all of this: God makes us a part of that process. God enables us to participate in the glorification of the Son of Man. And here’s where we get to the connection between the first half and the second half of today’s gospel.

The second half of today’s gospel is all about the “new command” Jesus gives to his disciples: “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” There’s a straight line running between what Jesus says about the glorification of the Son of Man and what he says about the new commandment.

The thing that connects these two statements is this: when we love one another as Jesus has loved us, the glory of the Son of Man is manifest in the world, and where the glory of the Son of Man is manifest, there we see the glory of God.

I said a few moments ago that the gospel writer probably has more than one particular event in mind when he refers to the glorification of the Son of Man: not only does he have the cross in mind, he’s also thinking about the resurrection and the ascension. All of these things together testify to the glorification of the Son of Man.

In light of this new command Jesus gives to his disciples, it seems we might also say he has one another event in mind, namely, the coming of the Spirit. It is the Spirit that enables us to love one another as he loves us. That last bit is significant: it’s important to remember that his new command is not just that we love one another. That’s no big deal; “even the Gentiles do that,” Jesus says. What makes this both “new” and a command is that we love one another *as he has loved us*. We have to learn to love each other with *his* love, rather than with our own.

Immediately before and immediately after the conversation that’s described in today’s gospel,

Jesus shows his disciples what his love looks like. Immediately before this conversation, he washes their feet. Immediately after this conversation, he dies for them. That's what distinguishes the way he loves us. At one point he even spells it out for them: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you." Loving one another as he loves us is something only God can enable us to, and that's exactly what the coming of God's Holy Spirit is intended to enable us to do.

And the goal of all of this is glory, the glory of the creator revealed in the creation, the glory of the divine revealed in the human, the glory of the Father revealed in the Son, the glory of the Son revealed in us. That's pretty much exactly the kind of language Jesus uses to describe the relationships between himself, his Father, and his disciples: "because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you."

Jesus said to his disciples, "The one who has seen me has seen the Father." In light of today's gospel, it is in some ways not too much of a stretch to say that we are being called to order our lives so that we can legitimately say, "The one who has seen us—the one who has seen the love between us—has seen Jesus, because it is Jesus who enables us to love one another as he has loved us." That's a very scandalous thing to say, even a very *dangerous* thing to say. It can be a presumptuous thing to say, and we should not say it unless we are led to do so by God's Holy Spirit. But that's what Jesus is calling us to do; that's the kind of people Jesus is calling us to be.

In order for us to do that, we have to think about our lives and about ourselves the same way Jesus thought about his life and about himself. The words he spoke were not his own; he received them from his Father. The deeds he did were not his own; he did them because he saw his Father doing them. The life he lived was not his own; he received everything he had from his Father.

So our words must be his; our deeds must be his; our lives must be his. When we order our lives in ways that allow him to live in us and through us, we will find the same thing happening in our lives that happened in his life: we will be drawn further and further into the work he is doing, and because the work he is doing is his Father's work we will find ourselves drawn further and further into the life of God.

When that happens, our whole lives will be suffused with the glory of God, and we will be glorified in him. God has glorified his Son through his death, his resurrection, his ascension, and his indwelling presence made manifest through his Holy Spirit. "The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory ... full of grace and truth. ... From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace."

That's what it means to love one another as he loves us: it's about being the place where God's glory is revealed in the world, being the ones through whom God's work is done in the world, being the ones in whom God's glory is revealed. The Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, then God will be glorified in those who find themselves and their lives in him.

May we find ourselves in him so that his glory is revealed in us, and may everyone know that we are his disciples because of the love we have for one another. Amen.

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