

Find Life in the Son: Crossroad John 13:31-38

Introduction

Judas the traitor has just left the upper room. In a few short hours the disciples will enter the worst trial they've ever faced. They will be overwhelmed with fear and grief. All will seem lost. But Christ's words in John 13:31-38 reveal what is really going on and how they are to navigate it.

³¹ When he [Judas] 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."

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." ³⁷ Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸ Jesus answered,

“Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

Glorified/glorify (5x)—key word in 31-32

Love (4x)—key word in 33-35

Follow (3x)—key word in 36-38

1. Divine Glory in the Cross (31-32)
2. Mutual Love like Christ’s Love (33-35)
3. Following but Faltering Loyalty (36-38)

1. Divine Glory in the Cross (31-32)

³¹ When he [Judas] 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.”

Glory—OT—weightiness (importance); NT—shining splendor, majesty

To glorify God is not to make Him more glorious than He is, but to respond to Him in a way that displays or reflects how glorious He is—to shine out His attributes, to give praise and honor to Him for His attributes of shining splendor

Even the heavens declare His glory (Psalm 19). They display His creative genius and sustaining care.

Judas has gone out to betray the Lord Jesus. Soon the traitor will show up in the Garden of Gethsemane with a band of soldiers and chief priests to arrest Jesus, haul Him off to an illegal nighttime trial, and through a series of efforts see to it that He is crucified the next day. His followers will flee in terror and later hide themselves away for fear of arrest and execution themselves. Worse, their expectation of Christ launching His messianic kingdom will be dashed, and they will be beside themselves as to what to make of it all.

It is nothing short of stunning that Jesus would describe this gross miscarriage of justice, this deadly victory of His enemies, as bringing glory to God or to Himself. How is it even possible? Yet Jesus consistently refers to His suffering and death this way. "Now is the Son of man glorified."

Later this very evening He will pray this way:
John 17:4-5

⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Jesus brings glory to God by accomplishing His mission and then returning to His place alongside God the Father. His mission was to

make atonement for our sin—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. No sinner could be reconciled to a Holy God without the sacrifice of an innocent life for guilty lives. Jesus was the completely innocent Person, “delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God,” though crucified by wicked men (Acts 2).

Earlier He predicted—

John 12:23-24

²³ And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Gives us further insight into how this horrible series of events could glorify God the Father and God the Son.

The death of Christ was necessary to the fruitfulness He would produce.

“Son of man” (used in John 12 and 13)—the human who comes from heaven with the Ancient of Days to judge all the kingdoms of the world in righteousness at the end of the age. He rules an everlasting kingdom of the saints—those who belong to God.

The incarnation of God the Son and His subsequent sacrifice for sin is inseparable

from His role as the final Judge and everlasting King.

Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God is glorified in the crossbearing of Jesus Christ—displays His power to save, His justice by judging sin, His holiness by requiring purification from sin to come to Him, His faithfulness to His promises to send a Savior, His love that He would do so at such great cost.

Glorify Him at once—resurrection, ascension

People often think of God as they imagine Him to be. Sometimes a weak and doting grandfatherly yes man. Sometimes a cosmic

bully or a petulant tyrant. Sometimes as nothing at all but the creation of needy human beings.

Jesus shone out the splendor of who God is and what He's really like. He was the greatest Person who ever walked the planet, but gentle and full of humility, even to the point of death. He was full of deep insight into the hearts of human beings and full of compassion for the broken. He saw straight through hypocrisy and pride. He demonstrated that wickedness will be judged. There is no good ole boy club where God looks the other way. He rescued people from impossible defects, illnesses, and death itself. He showed God to be both willing and able to make good on His promises that one day these things will be utterly eradicated from our experience in the new heavens and earth where perfect righteousness will take up residence.

You glorify God when you worship Him for the God He actually is.

You glorify Jesus when you treat Him as who He actually is and trust Him for what He has truly accomplished.

Jesus glorified the Father. The Father glorified Jesus, the Son. And the Holy Spirit will do so as well.

The brutal execution of Jesus was necessary to rescuing His people from their sin—in

keeping with His name. Call Him Jesus, Yahweh saves, for He will save His people from their sin.

Applications

- Since Jesus and God His Father are glorified in the cross, what about versions of Christianity that ignore the cross and its significance?
- What does the determination of Jesus to go to the cross to glorify God tell you about how committed God is to saving sinners like us?
- If the self-sacrifice of Jesus brought glory to God, what are some ways you can glorify God by following the example of Jesus?

2. Mutual Love like Christ's Love (33-35)

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."

Little children—term of endearment, like the affection of loving parents toward their son or daughter

The apostle John uses this extensively in 1 John. It points to the family relationship God's

children have with Him. They bear His character in their spiritual DNA.

Jesus demonstrated His true character in His self-sacrificing love for His people. Those who are His children will do the same. Theirs is a life of loving self-sacrifice. Their journey of life is a crossroad, just as was His. Anything less distorts the image of who Jesus is.

The disciples could not follow Jesus through the gates of death and into heaven just yet, but they could display His love on earth till the day came for them to follow Him home.

To love others was not a new commandment, but a very old old one.

Deuteronomy 6: love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength

Leviticus 19: love your neighbor as yourself

Matthew 22—greatest commands, summing up all the law and the prophets

In what way then is it new? In this way—we are to love one another as He loved us, that is, sacrificially dying in our place.

John 10:11

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

1 John 3:16

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

John 13:35

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

Disciples—a learner and a follower; he learns from the master in order to teach others what He taught; he imitates the master in order to live as he lives

Love for one another—the focus here is on the love true Christians have for one another. How you treat your brothers and sisters in Christ reveals whether you are actually a disciple of Jesus and a child of God.

1 John 4:7-9

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

How often those who profess themselves to be Christians boldly violate this hallmark of truly born again believers!

G. Campbell Morgan refers to those "who fight the battles of heaven with the spirit of hell."

J. C. Ryle, II, 48: "How far from satisfactory is the state of those who are content with sound doctrinal opinions, and orthodox correct views of the Gospel, while in their daily life they give way to ill-temper, ill-nature, malice, envy, quarreling, squabbling, bickering, surliness, passion, snappish language, and crossness of word and manner. Such persons, whether they know it or not, are daily proclaiming that they are not Christ's disciples. It is nonsense to talk about justification, and regeneration, and election, and conversion, and the uselessness of works, unless people can see in us practical Christian love."

How do you treat other Christians on social media?

When you see the faults, failings, or sins of a Christian brother or sister, do you take the trouble to reach out to that person in love in an effort to restore them? That's the original context to "loving your neighbor as yourself" in Leviticus 19:17-18

¹⁷ "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your

neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. ¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Applications

- What are some practical ways you can show self-sacrificing love to your brothers and sisters in Christ on a regular basis?
- What are some ways you've violated Christ's command to love one another as He loved us, and how can you start to make things right?
- When have you seen the display of this kind of love draw others toward Christ?

3. Following but Faltering Loyalty (36-38)

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A call to humble awareness of our inherent weakness as human beings. Peter sincerely

and intensely desired to follow Jesus even to prison and death if need be.

In the accounts of Matthew 26 and Mark 14, Peter declared that even if all the other disciples forsook Jesus, He would never do so. And they all said with him that they'd be willing to die for Jesus.

But their flesh was weaker than they imagined. In the Garden of Gethsemane— Peter, James, and John fell asleep while Jesus agonized in prayer. And when Jesus was arrested, all the disciples fled. Peter and John followed at a distance, and Peter ended up denying the Lord three times when people near the trial thought they recognized him as a Jesus follower.

Jesus knew all along what Peter would face and how he would fail. He has always known just as much about you. Peter abandoned Jesus for a time, but Jesus never abandoned Peter. According to Luke's account, when Jesus predicted Peter's denial, He assured Peter of His care for him.

Luke 22:31-32

³¹ "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,
³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

Even the strongest of Jesus' disciples are still in need of grace and rescue—"I have prayed for you that your faith fail not."

Peter and the rest of the disciples were also still in need of training. And the only way to learn from Jesus is to stay close to Him. They all fled, but they all came back to Jesus after the resurrection, or perhaps it is better to say that He came back to them. He taught them for some forty days before He ascended to heaven.

Peter went back to fishing, but Jesus still wanted him to fish for men.

Restoration to usefulness in John 21: "Do you love me? Feed my sheep." 3x

They were all clearly in need of the Holy Spirit's power—look at difference from Pentecost onward. According to church history, Peter did follow the Lord even unto death. He was crucified upside down. Jesus refers to his eventual martyrdom in John 21:18b

When you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.

If the apostles, of Jesus faltered this way (most of whom were martyred for Christ), who are we to think we will never do so? They

were not hypocrites and fakes. They were sincere. They were following but faltering. And so it is with every one of us who desire to follow Jesus faithfully.

We follow, but we also falter. It is His grace that keeps us. It is His ongoing training that strengthens us. It is His Spirit that enables us to live for Him at all. Taking the crossroad is a difficult journey, full of self-denials and failures, but full of His blessing and shepherding care. His goodness and steadfast love will pursue us all the days of our lives, and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23).

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Applications

- What have you seen happen in your own life when you are overconfident about your ability to follow Jesus faithfully?

- According to Hebrews Jesus continues to intercede for His own, just as He did for Peter. How does it help you in your struggles to know Jesus is praying specifically for you?
- What failures have you experienced that have made you reluctant to come back to Jesus for restoration?
- How can knowing that His grace is sufficient for our weakness give you hope for yourself and for your faltering brothers and sisters in Christ?

Conclusion

The road of glory is a road of self-sacrificing love. 1 Peter 4:12-13

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also be glad when his glory is revealed.

As we go we travel alongside brothers and sisters on whom to pour out our love and they on us.

We all stumble along the way, but we will follow Jesus all the way home.

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