

Exegesis

13:31-32 – A significant shift is taken place, as John tells us, "Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." This is the last time Jesus will refer to himself as the 'Son of Man' (cf. 1:41; 3:13-14, 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 12:23, 34; 13:31).¹ As mentioned before (cf. *see 11:34*), the 'Son of Man' title is a hyperlink to Daniel 7 (cf. Isa. 49:3). This title speaks about Christ's unity with God.

So, it stands to reason that if Jesus is unified with the Father, then whatever glorifies the Son will glorify the Father and vice versa. This is why, within the span of two verses, Jesus uses a variation of the Greek term *doxazō* ("glorify") five times. But notice how that verb tense is both present and future. The "Son of Man" (as well as God) is not only glorified in that specific moment but both God (as well as the "Son of Man") will be glorified later. And, as we already know, this glorification refers to Christ's death (cf. 7:39; 12:27-33).² "Hence, for the evangelist's eyes of faith, Jesus' darkest hour is transformed into the hour of his glorification."³

Vs. 33 – With Judas' departure, Jesus' relief is palpable.⁴ He can finally talk to just those who were his *true* followers. Purged of the devil's disciple, the Lord is unincumbered by a false friend. Only those among God's family remain, for he addresses them as "Little children," and says, "yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you." Jesus references 7:33-34 and 8:21, wherein the Lord chastises the religious leaders for their unbelief and because of that they would not be allowed to follow Jesus. Back then, his words were said in condemnation; but with the disciples, these are words of comfort. Unlike the Pharisees and the chief priest who were not a part of God's family (cf. 8:44), the eleven were the Lord's sheep, and they will, eventually, follow their Good Shepherd (cf. 10:3-4). But, until then, they can rest assured that they are his "little children."⁵ The Father will not abandon his sons. Even in his absence, children of God know their familial bonds cannot be broken by distance (cf. Rom. 8:35-39).

¹ Klink (2016), p. 603.

² Keener (2012), 2:920.

³ Köstenberger (2008), p. 422; Morris (1995), p. 560, "Jesus is looking to the cross as he speaks of glory."

⁴ Carson (1991), p. 482, "Now the departure of Judas puts the actual machinery of arrest, trial and execution into motion."

⁵ Carson (1991), p. 483, notes that though John only uses **τεκνίον** (*teknion*) once in his gospel account, he uses it seven times in 1 Jn. 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4, and 5:21. Keener (2012), 2:921 points out that Jesus uses another term for children, **παῖδιον** (*paidion*), in 21:5. John uses this term and its variants thirteen times in his other books: 1 Jn. 2:13, 18; 3:1-2, 10; 5:2; 2 Jn. 1:1, 4, 14; 3 Jn. 4; Rev. 2:23; 12:4-5.

Vs. 34-35 – As all good parents do when they have to leave their kids alone for a time, Jesus gives his children some direction that ought to guide their behavior in his absence. And so, the Lord says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Four times Jesus told the disciples to "love" in these verses, and so, unsurprisingly, love becomes a major theme in what follows. In fact, terms referring to love only appear twelve times in Ch. 1-12, whereas love, in some form or another, shows up a staggering *forty-five* times in Ch. 13-17.⁶ Even the phrase "a new commandment" is in the emphatic position (i.e., the beginning), so this original directive is vital to *everything* that follows.⁷

Scripturally, the command to love is not unusual (cf. Deut. 6:5). The O.T. admonished Israelites to "love" their neighbor in the same way they loved themselves (cf. Lev. 19:9-18). And while that is a solid scriptural principle, and one that is echoed throughout the N.T. (cf. Mat. 22:36-40; Mar. 12:28-33; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14; 1 Jn. 4:20-21), in this passage, Jesus is commanding an even *greater* type love than what had already been prescribed. This is why he calls this a "new" commandment.⁸ Loving others as a person would love themselves was the norm. But self-love was no longer the standard; now, it was Christ-love. This type of love was something *more*. It was an *innovation*, an *improvement* on what was there already without excluding what was already there. When Jesus told the disciples to love "as I have loved you," he called them to love in a way they had not loved before. Never has a man loved himself more than Christ loved him, yet, amazingly, it is to this new standard that he calls his followers to love others. Children of God ought to love their Christian siblings, their neighbors, and the stranger in the same way and to the same extent that God has loved them: *self-sacrifice*. Thus, every loving action that falls short of sacrificial love falls short of the kind of love that Christ would have us express. So much so that if our love has cost us nothing, can we really say we have loved at all?

So important is this command that Jesus says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The trademark characteristic of the Lord's new covenantal community was not something like circumcision or nationalistic identity, as before (cf. Gen. 17:1-14). Nor would its primary feature be the Decalogue (cf. Ex. 20:1-17), as important as those principles may be.⁹ Above all other things, Jesus' followers would be marked by love and the kind of love that emulates Christ's love for them. Many symbols

⁶ Köstenberger (2008), p. 423, footnote 6.

⁷ Morris (1995), p. 562.

⁸ Keener (2012), 2:924.

⁹ Keener (2012), 2:925.

distinguish Christianity from other religions: the cross, the dove, the so-called 'Jesus fish' (a.k.a. Ichthys), etc. And many Christian traditions are unlike any other: holidays, saying grace, worshiping on the first day of the week, etc. But, make no mistake, love is the best symbol and tradition of a Christ-follower.¹⁰

To be sure, this is a love that has very little to do with what we may *feel* and everything to do with what we *do*. Unlike the world, which talks of love as a feeling, God's children know love to be an action (cf. 3:16). After all, believers ought to love when they don't feel like it. And they are to love by doing what no one else wants to do (cf. 13:12-17). They are even called to love the unlovable (cf. Lu. 6:27-36)! The kind of love that sets aside self tells others that they are more important than the idea of "self." Thus, though the follower of Jesus may have many virtues (cf. Gal. 5:22-23), the top quality every believer ought to cultivate is a love for others. Outside the church, hate runs rampant. But inside the church, may love reign supreme.

Vs. 36 – Does Peter want to talk more about loving one another? No. Peter wanted to know more about how Jesus was leaving them. John tells us, "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou?" He wanted to know the place, the exact address of Jesus' destination. But, rather than give him a straight answer, Jesus said, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards." The actual answer to Peter's question was too much for him now. Jesus knew this. And so, rather than telling him of Gethsemane, the monkey trial before the Sanhedrin, his appearance before Pilate, the crucifixion, his 3-day entombment, and, finally, the resurrection and ascension, the Lord tries to quiet Peter's mind by assuring him that he'll follow...*eventually*. This is similar to what Jesus said to Peter when the disciple refused to have his feet washed in 13:7. Had the disciple not been so clearly frazzled, he might've recognized Jesus' twice-repeated promise that, *afterward*, he would finally understand and would, *afterward*, follow in his Master's footsteps (cf. 21:18-19). Had Peter seen the correlation, he might've realized that, as before, he was treading on thin ice. If only he had learned to hold his tongue. But, as we'll see, Peter will make the same mistake again. He will press the issue further, and, in doing so, he will be truly humbled. In fact, as far as John's narrative is concerned, after this, he will not speak again until 18:17.

Vs. 37-38 – "Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" It seems Peter thought that the Lord said he "canst not follow" because of the threat of death.¹¹ This is why he says, "I will lay down my life for thy sake." Like Thomas (cf. 11:16), the lead apostle was

¹⁰ Kruse (2017), p. 341.

¹¹ Klink (2016), p. 606.

ready to die with Jesus. And we know that he was serious about this claim because, later, we'll learn that Peter brought a sword with him to a prayer meeting (cf. 18:10-11).

But though Peter seemed certain, the Lord was less so. In fact, the uncertainty in Jesus' words when he said, "wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake," must've stung. Peter vows to die, and the Lord responds with, "Really? Are you sure about that?" Also, there is some irony to Jesus' words as the one who would be shortly laying down his life was not Peter but Jesus.¹²

But Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. And although the disciple might've been sincere, his resolve would crumble. As Jesus predicts, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." Peter's betrayal is told in every gospel account (cf. Matt. 26:30-35; Mar. 14:26-31; Lu. 22:31-34). The fact that such an embarrassing thing about such a prominent church figure was so widely shared within the Christian community "testifies to its historical verity."¹³ If one were to fabricate a story, why humiliate yourself so spectacularly?

Anyways, if you'll recall, it was already night when this happened (cf. 13:30). Peter's loyalty, so resolute and tenacious at this moment, would not last till morning. Peter will have fallen away by the time the rooster woke and cowed its first call.¹⁴ The rays of the sun will reveal a man weeping bitterly because he has thrice denied the very man he had sworn himself to protect (cf. Lu. 22:62). "Sadly, good intentions in a secure room after good food are far less attractive in a darkened garden with a hostile mob."¹⁵

Whatever is in the heart of man is not to be trusted (cf. Jer. 17:9). Jesus knew this all too well of others (cf. 2:23-25), and he, of course, knew this about his own followers. Confidence that is based on man's resolve will inevitably fail. We are but frail and fickle creatures too easily tossed by the winds of circumstance? Our only hope is in God. As he will be ready to restore Peter (cf. 21:15-19), the Lord is prepared to revitalize those who've fallen. Though we may go back on a thousand promises, break a thousand vows, and nix a thousand agreements, God will not reciprocate in kind. As Paul said in 1 Thess. 5:24, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Should we want to be faithful, we must rely on the only trustworthy One. After all,

¹² Morris (1995), p. 563-564.

¹³ Keener (2012), 2:928.

¹⁴ Köstenberger (2008), p. 424, citing Carson (1991), p. 487, explains, "As to the crowing of the rooster, apparently roosters in Palestine frequently crowed in the late-night hours, so that the Romans assigned the label "cockcrow" to the watch between midnight and 3:00 A.M." Though, Keener (2012), 2:929, cast doubt on such an interpretation explaining most people would've understood a cock crowing to reference dawn.

¹⁵ Carson (1991), p. 486.

following Jesus is always harder than we expect. Who better to rely on than he who already knows what to expect?

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | John | Week 44

Text: John 13:31-38

Tonight, we'll finally start to unpack the so-called 'Farewell Discourse.' And the first few topics that Jesus covers are his glorification/departure. And like any good parent who has to leave their children alone for a time, the Lord gives the disciples a prevailing ethic to govern their entire existence during his absence: *love each other as I have loved you*. And though the moment will be primed for Jesus to unpack what he means by that command, Peter suddenly interrupts the flow, insisting he ought to know where the Lord is going. He even declares he will follow Jesus to the grave. But, as with the foot-washing (cf. 13:6-10), this interaction does not go well for Peter. In fact, he will not speak again until five chapters later (cf. 18:10).

All told, tonight's lesson is equal parts edification and warning. Jesus' command to love as he loved is so great that we cannot rely upon ourselves. If we do, we'll end up like Peter. Our only hope is in God. As he will be ready to restore Peter (cf. 21:15-19), the Lord is prepared to revitalize those who've fallen. Though we may go back on a thousand promises, break a thousand vows, and nix a thousand agreements, God will not reciprocate in kind. As Paul said in 1 Thess. 5:24, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

Should we want to be faithful, we must rely on the only trustworthy One. After all, following Jesus is always harder than we expect. Who better to rely on than he who already knows what to expect?

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: