

A Christ-Exalting Community

John 13:31-35

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Church can easily become merely a place for socialization, community service, or furthering social agendas. But the ultimate goal of every church should be to exalt Christ. We must glorify Jesus in everything we do, because outsiders see Jesus through us. So in college fellowship when we were disruptive in the common area, we made Jesus look as inconsiderate as we were. We must reflect Jesus accurately to the outside world in order to glorify Him. And we glorify Jesus by loving Him, by hoping in Him, and by loving each other. And as each of us individually glorifies Jesus, our community will become more Christ-exalting.

Today's passage begins right after Judas leaves to betray Jesus. The hour has come for Jesus to be glorified. This hour, mentioned throughout the gospel of John, refers to the time of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. It is the culmination of His ministry. He didn't merely come to heal and teach, but to die and be raised again for all mankind. He came to reconcile us with the Father, so we could be forgiven and adopted as children of God. This is what glorifies Jesus, not that He received glory He never had, but rather that His true glory and the depth of His love has been finally revealed to all at this hour.

To glorify Jesus, we must love Him, which means fully appreciating His glory revealed through His sacrifice. We must recognize Jesus' beauty in His perfect humanity. He is what Adam and all of us were meant to be. Jesus was perfectly obedient in everything, even unto death. Not only did He obey until the time of His death, but He obeyed by laying down His life willingly, even though He didn't deserve death. We must also realize that Jesus is the almighty God, as revealed through His miracles such as healing, casting out demons, raising the dead, and calming the storm. It was also with complete sovereignty that Jesus willingly laid down His life and took it up again (John 10:18). Only almighty God Himself could swallow up the wrath of God towards sin and achieve victory over the grave. Third, we must realize that Jesus is the infinitely loving God, who doesn't turn people away. He has compassion on the crowds who are hungry, so He provides them with food after teaching and healing their sick. He weeps compassionately at Lazarus' death, even though He knows He will raise Lazarus from the dead. And His love reaches a climax at the cross, where He gave up His life for those who don't

deserve salvation and didn't even reach out to God yet. Jesus' love never fails, so we who received this love can't help but love Him back.

In v. 31 Jesus says the Father is glorified in the Son. From John 1 we know that the Word became flesh in order to show the Father to mankind. Jesus made the Father known and demonstrated the Father's love on the cross. We know the Father by looking to the Son. So by loving Jesus, we show that Jesus is worthy of our love, but we also glorify the Father.

When we hope in Jesus, we also glorify Him. Jesus' glory was veiled in humanity. When He emptied Himself to be born as a man, He laid aside the access to and revelation of His glory. So people didn't recognize Him as God. Yet He still died for those who didn't know Him. Verse 32 speaks of the unveiling of His glory in the Father, or rather in the presence of the Father, which took place when Jesus ascended to heaven (John 17:5). At the resurrection, Jesus' body was glorified, no longer subject to sickness and decay. This glorification of the body is part of what we hope for when Jesus returns. When we see Him we will be like Him. But Jesus' deity was also unveiled in heaven. Revelation 5 speaks of how all in heaven bow down to and worship Him. Ultimately for us, our hope is to be close to the glory of Jesus. In v. 33 Jesus tells the distressed disciples that He must go where they cannot follow, but in v. 36 He says that they will follow later on. Meanwhile Jesus prepares a place for us. We have a place in God's household because we are now His children, waiting to come home and be united with Him. We put our hope in Jesus because He's worth it. Just like we hope for a promotion or in having an ideal family because we think these things are worth waiting for, we hope in Jesus who is worth so much more. We often focus on how we live now, but we must not forget that our hope is in Jesus' return, without which our faith is futile.

Finally, we glorify God by loving one another just as Jesus loved us (vv. 34-35). This is a high bar. It means loving unconditionally, without expectation of praise, reciprocation, or gratitude. It means to seek other's joy and best interests before our own. It means sacrificing ourselves for others, not to receive anything, but because this is how Jesus loved us first. This is how we are called to love. We can't say we love someone but don't like them; there's no room for grudges, passive-aggression, or dissension. We glorify God when we love not with our own kind of love, but with Jesus' love overflowing from within us. This is how the world knows who Jesus is, and this should be the mark of His disciples (v. 35). A good example of this is the story of Rosaria Butterfield, who once was a practicing lesbian but was converted to Christianity after

a pastor welcomed her into his home for two years engaging in civil dialogue. This act was not in lieu of preaching the gospel, but rather it was living out the gospel through actions of love. And this love of Christ displayed through His disciples is what reached her heart and brought her to Christ. Let us pray that God will make us a community that glorifies Christ in this way.