

Cleansed for Relationships

From our previous study, we learned that Jesus has begun His “private teaching ministry” with His beloved disciples. In seeking to demonstrate for them how much He would love them on Calvary’s cross, He took off His outer garments, put on a towel, and washed their filthy feet. We learned that one can only understand this humble action of Jesus by understanding the cross itself. The cross continues to cast a shadow over this chapter as we continue our studies. In this text, we will see some significant reasons why we glory in the cross of Jesus Christ.

John 13:18-35

18 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ **19** I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. **20** Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

One of You Will Betray Me

21 After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” **22** The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. **23** One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus’ side, **24** so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. **25** So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” **26** Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. **27** Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” **28** Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. **29** Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. **30** So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

A New Commandment

31 When he 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.”

I. Through the cross, Jesus demonstrates His profound love for us (vv. 18-30)

In the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, we are certainly warned of the dangers of “externalism,” that is, adhering only to outward traditions or behaviors rather than giving our hearts to the Lord. The main thing we learn in this text, however, is that Jesus was willing to undergo the massively painful experience of personal betrayal in order that we might be saved. Jesus quotes Psalm 41:9 in order to explain Judas’ action and the meaning of it for Him. We have all been betrayed by close associates at one time or another, so we can understand how painful this was for Jesus. He was willing to do that for you and me. We also see in verse 19 that He explains this event so that we will not be diverted from our devotion to Him. Even in the midst of His pain, He is thinking only of us! Peter Kreeft put it this way, “We sinned for no reason but an incomprehensible lack of love, and He saved us for no reason but an incomprehensible excess of love.”

II. Through the cross, Jesus glorifies God (vv. 31-32)

In the cross, Jesus glorifies Himself — His infinite compassion and His amazing courage — and He also glorifies the Father. The Father is glorified for His great wisdom in providing a way of salvation which maintains the standards of His own justice while also effecting His desire to

save lost sinners. His holiness is glorified through the obvious display of His wrath against sin, even when it is placed upon Jesus' shoulders; His faithfulness to His promises is displayed in that He would sacrifice His own Son rather than break His promises to redeem us. Thus Paul rightly declares, "but far be it for me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

III. **To the cross Jesus has called us as His disciples (vv. 33-35)**

As the old saying goes, "to live above with those we love — that will be glory. To live below with those we know — that's another story."

But Jesus calls us not just to tolerate one another, but to die for each other. There must be a cross between each one of us and the other person in Christ's Church. All of our relationships tend to be conditional, but the cross of Christ enables us to break the conditionality of our love, so that we love one another not because the other has loved us, but rather because Jesus has loved us.

And then, in verse 35, we see why this is so important. The world will know that there are disciples on the earth when they see the love of Jesus in community. It is vital that we demonstrate this love to the world, that they may know that Jesus has come to the world.

Discussion Questions

1. What should we learn from Judas' betrayal of Jesus?
2. What are the evidences of Jesus' love for His disciples in verses 18-30?
3. Why did Jesus cite Psalm 41:9 in verse 19?
4. Describe what it feels like to be betrayed by a friend. How does this experience help you to understand Jesus' love for you?
5. How was God glorified by Judas' betrayal? (Cf. verses 31, 32)

6. If Christians were to love each other as Jesus commands in verse 34, what sort of things would change in the Church?

7. Why is Christian brotherly love so important?

Going Deeper

1. In what relationships do you most need to “take up the cross”?

2. If you do take up the cross in those relationships, how will your responses and reactions specifically change?