

You Know You Are a Disciple If ... ©

1 Cor. 13; John 13:31-35

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³¹⁻³² ... Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is seen for who he is, and God is seen for who he is in him. The moment God is seen in him, God’s glory will be on display. In glorifying him, he himself is glorified—glory all around!

³³ “Children, I am with you for only a short time longer. You are going to look high and low for me. But just as I told the Jews, I’m telling you: ‘Where I go, you are not able to come.’

³⁴⁻³⁵ “Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.” (The Message)

Let’s have a little fun this morning, shall we?

I have a confession to make. In case you hadn’t guessed it, I come from Redneck Country, (I know a lot of those jokes are about Arkansas, but they tell them on Oklahomans as well) and, being related to a few rednecks myself, I feel that I have a special privilege in being able to tell a few, clean redneck jokes. So, here goes:

You just might be a Redneck if ... You trim your beard and find a French fry.

You just might be a Redneck if ... You use a piece of bread as a napkin.

You just might be a Redneck if ... Your car alarm eats dog food.

If you think Hamlet is on the McDonald's breakfast menu ... You just might be a Redneck.

If your kids are going hungry tonight because you had to see your maw run her car at the demolition derby ... You’re probably a Redneck.

And finally, you just might be a Redneck if ... Your old car is now considered the main storage unit.

What a way to start a sermon! But, maybe I have a Redneck sense of humor, because when I was reading this passage and trying to decide on the sermon title, which as you can see is *"You Know You Are a Disciple If ..."* I couldn't help but think of Jeff Foxworthy's Redneck jokes. And as funny as they are (and somewhat exaggerated at times) I have actually seen some of these things in some good folks back home. I will say they are the first to laugh at themselves with those jokes.

But, all kidding aside, the way we act truly does say a lot about who we are, doesn't it?

Jesus says we are to love one another the way he has loved us. "This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples," he said, "when they see the love you have for each other."

Well, of course. That makes perfect sense, doesn't it? We Christians have heard this all of our lives.

Who can tell me what Jesus said were the two greatest commandments?

1. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. (Deut. 6:5) (NRSV)

(Love GOD, your God, with your whole heart: love him with all that's in you, love him with all you've got!) - The Message

2. To love your neighbor as you love yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. – Mark 12:31

But now, Jesus is giving this commandment as he is about to leave the disciples. He tells them that he is going away to a place where they cannot go; they might look for him, but they won't be able to find him. One of the Gospel questions I gave you to think about this week, after reading this passage in John was this:

1. What do you think it was like for the disciples to hear Jesus say to them that in a little while they would no longer see him and not be able to find him?

Confusion? Fear? Maybe anger, that they had given so much of their time, their lives to this man who is telling them he is leaving them?

They were there to celebrate the Passover Feast – a great, joyous remembrance of the exodus out of Egypt so long ago; of God's saving their ancestors from the bondage of slavery and bringing them into their own land – a land promised by God.

But this announcement by Jesus, must have put a damper on the celebration, don't you think?

But John says Jesus loved them (his friends; his disciples) to the end. As a demonstration of that love, he – the teacher, the Master, rose from the table, took off his robe and wrapped a towel around his waist and began washing their tired, dirty, stinky feet.

This was an act of servanthood. Only the servants of the Master washed the feet of the guests. But Jesus turned it around and becomes the slave of those who follow him.

It was a hushed and holy moment ... a time when pure love was poured out onto the feet of the friends of Jesus. And Jesus told them he has shown them how they ought to serve one another. If the Master, the teacher, will become a slave to them, then, if they love him, they will follow his example.

He tells them his time is almost up. A time when he would show God's glory and God's glory would be revealed in him.

So (Gospel Question #2) - what do you think the relationship is between the "glory" Jesus talks about and his command to "love one another"?

What was the greatest act of love Jesus did for us? While washing feet was certainly an act of love, the greatest act of all, was the sacrifice he gave us at the cross. Love was poured out in his death. He bore the stripes and pain of agonizing beatings. His hands were nailed to the wood of the cross. His side was pierced by a sword.

The love on that cross was incomparable to any love we could ever imagine or show.

Yet, Jesus said "as I have loved you, love one another." That's a pretty tall order, isn't it? Because "as he loved us" – that means sacrifice. It means loving enemies. (Remember, when Jesus washed the disciples' feet, Judas had not yet left the room. His feet were washed by Jesus' too, even though Jesus knew what Judas was going to do.)

It was in this great act of love for the world – for those who were friends of God, and those who were enemies – that Jesus gave his life and in doing so, he showed God's glory; God's glorious love was shown in his Son.

What is glory? You might ask. We talk about it and we sing about it. I like the way John Piper puts it:

"The public display of the infinite beauty and worth of God is what I mean by "glory," and I base that partly on Isaiah 6, where the seraphim say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of his—" and you would expect them to say

"holiness" and they say "glory." They're ascribing "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of his—" and when that goes public in the earth and fills it, you call it "glory." ¹

So God's glory is the radiance of his holiness, the radiance of his manifold, infinitely worthy and valuable perfections."

That's heady stuff, but I love the description!

So, let's go back to the question: - what do you think the relationship is between the "glory" Jesus talks about and his command to "love one another"?

Could it be that in our loving, we also reveal God's glory? Since we are created in God's image, and if God's glory is "The public display of the infinite beauty and worth of God," as John Piper describes it (which by the way matches many other descriptions I found from Bible Scholars), could we be part of that public display of the infinite beauty and worth of God?

Yes! Yes! I think we can be. When we follow Jesus' command to love one another; when we demonstrate that selfless love that Jesus shows us; when we know deep in our hearts that God is love and that we are God's beloved, we are a part of that public display of God's beauty and worth. We are manifesting God's glory on earth!

I want you to think for a moment about ways you have experienced love from one another. How have you been shown love? Some of it might have been very simple acts of love – and those acts count, big time!

One night last summer, after a Session meeting, I decided to swing through the Dairy Queen for an ice cream cone. I didn't notice that the Lyles were right in front of me until we were in line. They got their order, waved, and drove off. When I pulled up to pay for my order – guess what? It was already paid for! They told me the people in front of me had paid for my order. It was a little act of love that made me smile and feel very happy and cared for.

When we moved here, we expected that our apartment would be ready to move into. Most of you know we had some troubles with it. The Browns had already shown great hospitality by offering their home to us for the weekend until we could get our furniture in. But, when we discovered it was going to be several days, they insisted Fred and I and our 2 kitties stay with them until it was time to move in. That was an act of love for people they did not even know yet. And it meant the world to us. It made the transition so much easier than it would have been if we had to find a hotel and figure all that out.

¹ John Piper; <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/ask-pastor-john/what-is-gods-glory>

There have been many acts of love that you have shown to me as your pastor in the two years Fred and I have been here. They are all meaningful, Christ-like, sacrificial offerings of love that make us know we belong among you.

I know the stories of many of you; stories of pain and hurt and anger; stories of joy and transformation. And in every one of those life stories, there are acts of love that others – many who are here – have gone out of their way to give, and in doing so that love planted hope and renewed faith and gave some joy and a sense of confidence that you would not have found alone. They represented Jesus to you by their acts of love; they displayed God's glory to you.

Of course, sometimes loving is easy. It's a joy to love some people, isn't it? It's especially easy to love our friends, the people we know who are like us.

But then there are those times when it isn't easy at all. When people are cranky and obstinate; when their anger at the world seems aimed at you. There are those who are so different from us that we have such a difficult time understanding why they are like they are.

But Jesus says to love them all - and to pray for our enemies. I'm not always sure how to love them, so I pray for them and pray for love that I can show somehow. Who are our enemies, anyway?

There are personal enemies – people who just don't like you, who make your life miserable, who tell lies about you, who make fun of you and bully you, who might persecute you or try to hurt you. Maybe even try to kill you. How do you love someone like that? Yet, Jesus certainly did, didn't he? And he says we are to love as he loves.

Then there are the enemies we look at as a community. Are there people who want to hurt us as a group of people – as people of faith? What about terrorists? People who set off bombs in public places for the purpose of killing innocent people? What about people who enter school rooms and shoot as many children as possible?

Can we love them? Can we forgive them, as Christ has forgiven? Jesus tells us we should, if we are his followers.

I like the way The Message translates what Jesus said in Matthew 5:

"You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep

open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven. - Matthew 5:16

When we shine with God's love, we are showing the light of God's glory. Loving as God loves us isn't always easy. Sometimes we will succeed and sometimes we won't.

But remember this – whether you are 100% loving this coming week – or if you fail miserably and have to try again – neither your success nor your failure – can take away the amazing, unconditional, immeasurable love that is given to you as a free gift of grace, shown in that sacrificial gift of God's own Son, dying on a cross for you; and that glorious power of resurrection and eternal life that was shown in the empty tomb when Jesus was raised from the dead.

Nothing can take away God's love for you! Nothing. Nada. When you know that and you believe; when you feel it in your bones, deep in your heart; when it pulses through your veins – “God loves me! God loves me! God loves ME!”

We strive for being like the One in whose image we are created – God, the Father. We do our best toward living the life of love that shows we are disciples of the Son – Jesus, the Christ. And we have confidence that the Holy Spirit is in us, helping us to do just as he has commanded.

If you love one another – you just might be a disciple of Jesus Christ!

They will know we are Christians by our love.

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