



May 15, 2022

This Week's Big Idea
Worth The Trouble

Introduction: The gospel we hear this morning is a bit of a time warp ... it actually takes place on the night before Jesus died. But the theme - that God's glory comes not in power, but in acts of love - is at the heart of the Easter message. And it challenges each of us to consider how we have reflected God's glory through our loving words and actions lately.

John 13:31-35 NRSV

³¹When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Bible Conversation

This passage takes place right after Judas leaves the group to betray Jesus. How does that fit with Jesus' words in v. 31?

If you knew this was the last conversation you would have with Jesus, what would you ask him?

V. 34-35 presents one of the simplest, yet hardest, of Jesus' commands. How does it challenge you today?

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Reflection by Pastor Shelley Cunningham

Last week Pastor Rob asked an excellent question as part of his sermon: *Do we take this story seriously?* In his case, he was talking about the apostle Peter raising Tabitha from the dead, as recounted in Acts 9. But it's a legitimate - and excellent - question anytime we read scripture.

So, after reading this passage from John, I ask you: *Do we take this story seriously?* In particular, do we take those famous words from Jesus in v. 34-35 to heart, and strive diligently to make them so in our lives. And what happens if we do - and if we don't?

We can always find wiggle room - ways to make exceptions. We love people who are lovable, and often feel perfectly justified in looking the other way or discounting or denigrating the actions and opinions of people who are a lot harder to love.

But Jesus wasn't messing around. After all, the author of John put this exhortation immediately after Jesus acknowledges that Judas is going out to betray him. It might even be interpreted that Jesus understands what will come of this act, and gives Judas his blessing to go anyway. And his next words to the disciples? *This* is another example of how God is glorified - when we extend compassion and openness even to people who can hurt us.

Please hear me: this is not a text that is meant to justify, or excuse abuse or intentional mistreatment. That is never what God intends, and it is not a way to show others love.

But it is a challenge for all of us. If we take this story seriously - and I pray we do - we might need to set aside our pride, our opinions, our comfort, our security - in the name of love.

Reflection Conversation

What makes it hard to love other people?

The 1 Question:

Who is God calling you to love right now, and how can you show Jesus' love to them?

Closing Prayer

Lord of love, without your help, we're likely to share love only with those people we care about - people who think like us, look like us, act like us. Yet you say, 'Love everybody, all the time.' That's so hard. But we trust that your love can change the world. Use us to make that change as we practice patience, put others first, and listen with open hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Next Week's Bible Theme and Text:

Graduate Recognition Sunday
Text: John 14:23-29

**1 week.
1 story.
1 message.**