



*June 4, 2023*

*"The Four-letter Word, Love"*

*SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King's Kids.*

*News:*

**★VBS June 12-16★ ★Church Camp August 24-27★**

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# Alêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



ΕΝΑΡΧΗ Η ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΗΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΗΝ  
ΘΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΘΕ ΤΗΝ ΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΣΥ ΤΟΣ ΗΝ ΕΝΑΡΧΗ ΤΙΡΟΣ  
ΤΟΝ ΘΗΝ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΟ ΥΕ ΓΕΝΕΣΤΟ ΚΑΙ ΧΩΡΙΣ



Last week we saw Judas leave the Light of the World in favor of eternal night. Jesus did everything He could to help Judas remain, but for Judas, it all only served to harden his heart and steel his resolve.

Judas had mistaken his own agenda as being God's agenda.

When we do that... When we do that, it is because our human pride assumes that what we want must be what God wants. There is no way that God could want Jesus to die, Peter reasoned. There is no way God could want the Kingdom of God on earth further delayed, Judas reasoned. There's no way God wants me to

suffer, we reason. Some of the most horrific injustices in human history have been perpetrated by people thinking exactly that - that there's no way God wants... In this case we find that Judas was on his way to betray the most innocent blood of all.



John 13:31–38, 31Therefore when he had left, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; 32if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. 33Little children, I am still with you a little longer. You will look for Me; and just as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you: ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ 34I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that

you also love one another. 35By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.” 36Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.” 37Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.” 38Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.

There’s a lot going on here. Fear not, we’ll take it in sections, but I read the passage as a whole because it serves as the introduction to what is known as Jesus’ Farewell Discourse. The topics that arise in this exchange will be further developed, amplified, and explained, over the next few chapters.

The first topic area has to do with Jesus’ pronouncement about Glory. We’ve discussed the concept of Glory before, and so I’ll just hit the highlights today. You’ll remember that Glory is δόξαζω (dō-xä-dzō), the verb of δόξα (dō-xä). A doxology is a hymn or prayer glorifying God.

What is interesting, at least to me, is that the underlying meaning has to do with considering value. It

means to think about and therefore develop the opinion that someone is worthy of the greatest praise. It is for a person to honor, respect, worship, adore, and applaud someone because they truly think that that's the right thing to do, that they genuinely consider that object to be glorious.

That leads to two levels in this case, the level of human or angelic recognition that God is glorious and therefore to be glorified - which is subjective. And the level of the Truth of it objectively. The most perfectly objective reality that exists is what God thinks. God's opinion is always perfectly accurate Truth without a hint of error, or deception. It is objective reality. God is glorious, period. That's true regardless of whether anyone, mortal or immortal, agrees. It's objectively true.

Beyond the subjective and objective types there is the reality that in either case for someone or something to be truly glorious, the glory must be earned - true glory does not exist absent the doing of something glorious. We see all around us, as well as chronicled in the Bible, God actively earning, in our physical reality, His glorious status in many ways, with the most glory-earning of them all, being that He gave up the Word of

God to this horror show humans have created. God sent that portion of Himself to become a flesh and blood man, among violent, hate-filled, flesh and blood men. God, now made frail human, Who, with His perfect life, went on to pay for the rebellion of the very creatures who shamefully put Him to death. That's ironic and it's also by far the most glorious thing imaginable. Now done, it not only establishes God's gloriousness for all eternity, it vindicates it.



That takes us to another concept. The Glory nascent within. As an example, Eddie Rickenbacker was a scrawny kid of 13, when his dad died in a brawl, forcing him to quit school and get a job to help support his family. Who knew then, that he would become a

famous race car driver, the top American fighter pilot of WW I, Medal of Honor recipient, and longtime chief of Eastern Airlines? I know some of you will say what airline? Well, when Eddie ran it Eastern was one of the world's top 3 airlines. Now, all of that was within the 13-year-old boy, all the time. We can't see such things, but God can - He knows.

Now, let's take that to another level. God is eternal, timeless, immutable, pure existence. From His perspective, there was never a "time" when He hadn't already sacrificed Himself on behalf of His creatures. He's always been glorious and always will be glorious... The question is, with your life and your resources, are you recognizing that Truth?



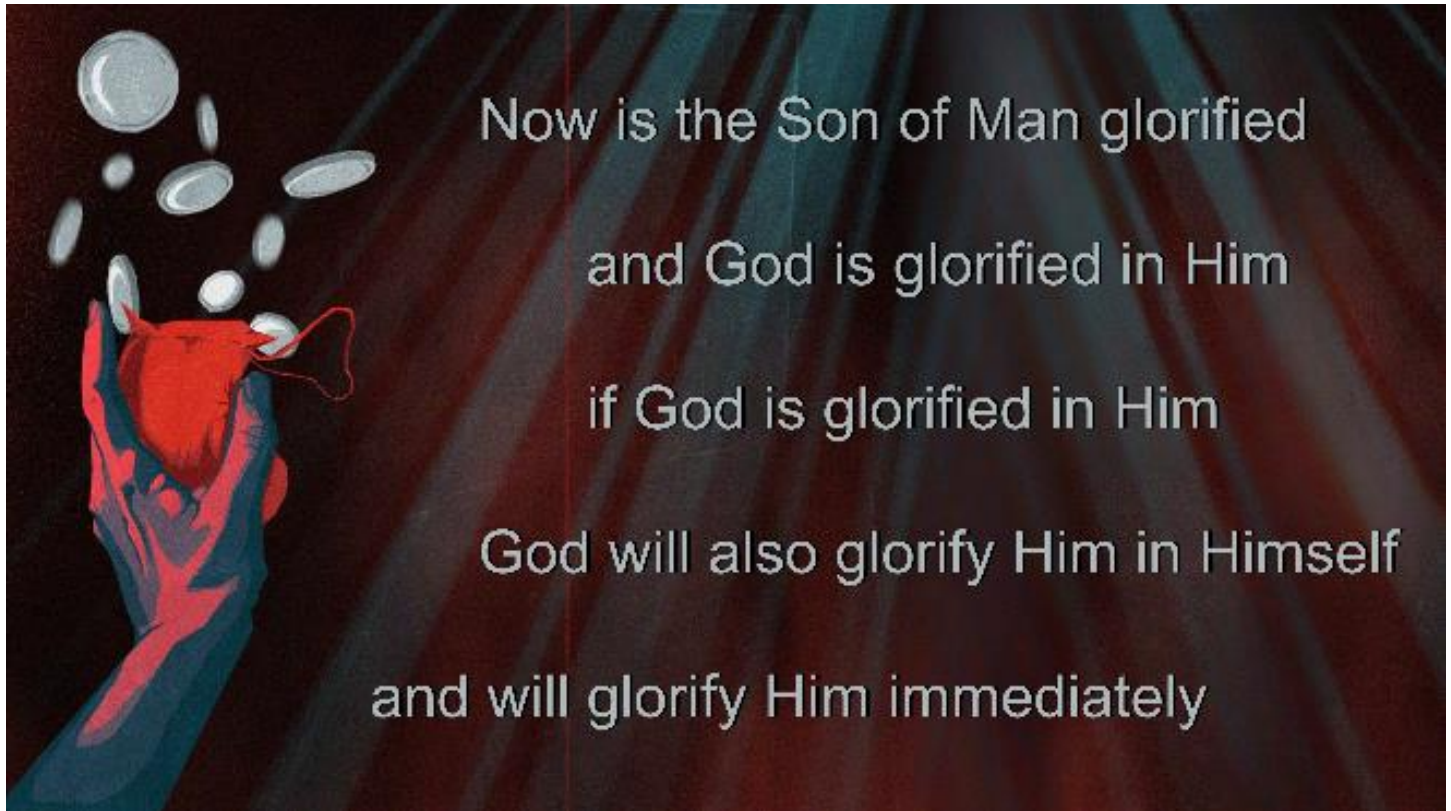


# Eternal

That leads us into the interesting is the way Jesus did this. In these first two verses He gave five statements, each one mentioning glory and each one with verb tenses that are unexpected. The verb tenses are so strangely laid out that most liberal scholars have dismissed this as nothing more than poor writing. They conclude that the awkwardness is due to John's clumsiness with the Greek language. Just bad grammar, they say. Just incompetent scholarship, I say.

What has clearly been shown by more thorough scholars is that Jesus intentionally used the tenses to evoke and describe the eternal timeless nature of the glory of which He spoke. Yes, these were actual events

on the physical, chronological, timeline, but the glory of those events always existed, exists now, and will exist forever.



Looking at it again, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified (1), and God is glorified in Him (2); 32if God is glorified in Him (3), God will also glorify Him in Himself (4), and will glorify Him immediately (5).

We start the first statement with “Now.” Jesus was saying that even though there were still several hours before His Crucifixion the plan, with Judas on his way to the chief priests, is in motion and so it can be said that the Glorification of Jesus is at hand. See that? It’s in process - it’s happening - we’re in the end game.

Well, the plan has always been in motion, and so it's just as right to say that the Glorification of Jesus has always been at hand. Not only is there a present time aspect of what will be culminated in the future... There is a past element. That past element goes all the way back to the beginning of the process. But wait, what's this? There is no beginning of the process with God and so from all eternity it is true that "NOW, is the Son of Man glorified."

I think it's obvious that the glory continues into the forever future as well. It is much the same when people ask me, "Hey, Scott do you think that we are living in the end times?" Without any question at all, absolutely, of course, yes! "Well, how can you be so sure?" Because the Apostle Paul was living in the end times nearly 2,000 years ago. When Jesus said the words recorded here, it was closer to the physical event of His glorification than when the Egyptians were figuring out how to build a pyramid and that's just like we are closer to the physical end of the world than Paul, but we can all recognize it is at hand, if it's a done deal, and from God's perspective it most certainly is a done deal.



Before we go on to the other statements let's revisit the term "Son of Man." First, it is an official title, not simply a novel way of referring to a human being. It was Jesus' most used title for Himself while He was here on earth. Many people suppose He used it because it made Him more approachable, He was humble, or that He enjoyed emphasizing His connection to us.

Even more people assume that it's the title Son of God, which refers to Jesus' divinity, while His title the Son of Man refers to His humanity. As I've mentioned before, it's the exact opposite of that. Jesus Himself indicated that the term Son of God could be applied to human beings who truly loved God by actually obeying His

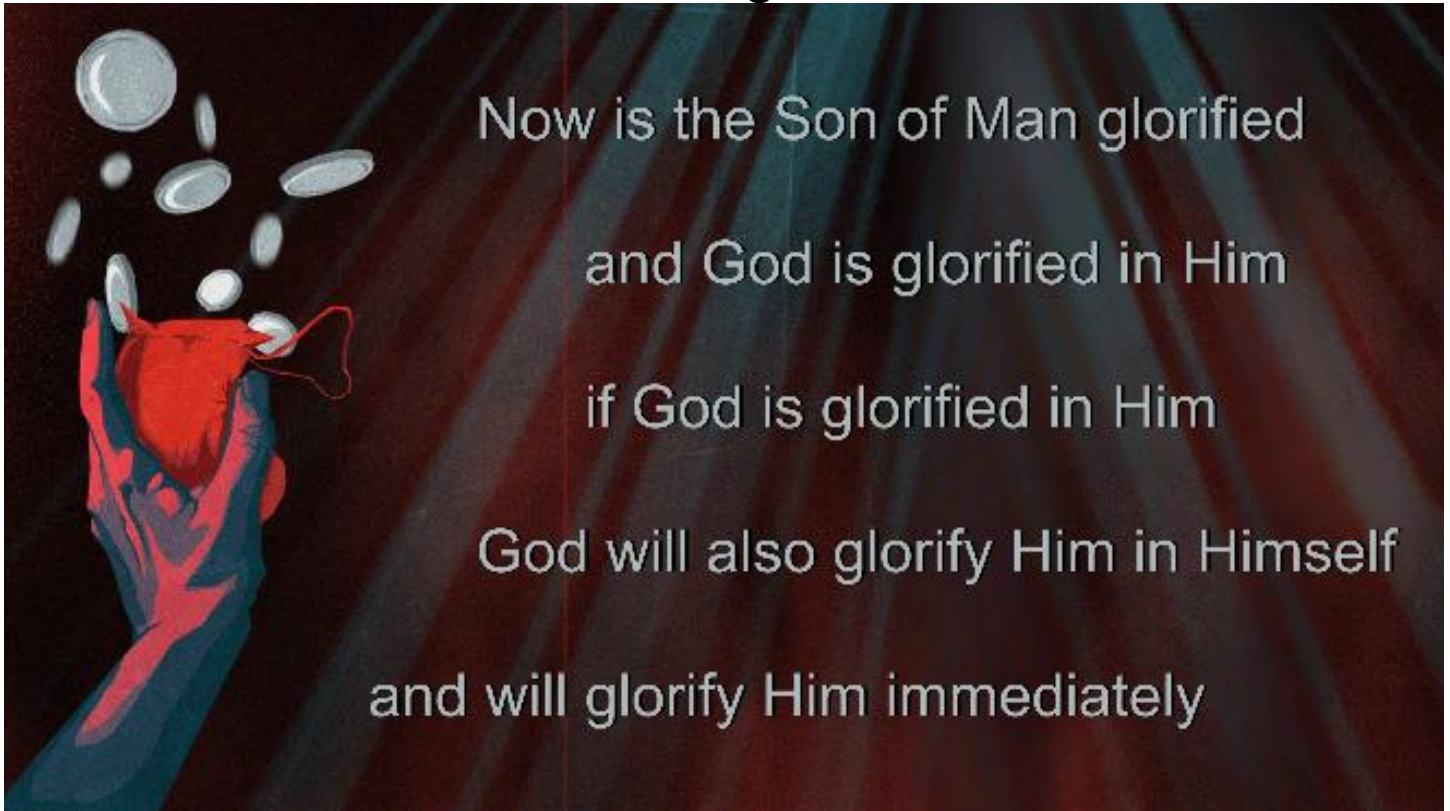
Commands to serve Him and others. They were true children of God.

The title Son of Man in this context comes from the Prophet Daniel in his eponymous Book chapter 7, verses 13&14, where he wrote, 13“In my vision I saw One who looked like a son of man. He was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Eternal God (The Ancient of Days). He was led right up to him. 14And he was given authority, glory and a kingdom. People from every nation and language worshiped him. His authority will last forever. It will not pass away. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

When Jesus repeatedly applied the title of that cosmic apocalyptic character to Himself, you can see why the Jewish scholars charged Him with making Himself out to be God. The Son of Man had to be God Himself in some way because the kingdom He is given, is the Kingdom of God.

That’s what Jesus was hinting at in John 5:26&27, one of the times that the Jews wanted to stone Him for the blasphemy of making Himself equal to God. Jesus said, “For just as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27and He

gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.” That Messianic title declares a unique relationship between God and man. One not understood, until Jesus was glorified.



The 2nd statement after “Now is the Son of Man glorified,” is really the other half of the first statement, “and God is glorified in Him.” It refers to the inextricable link between Jesus, the Word of God physically on earth and the Godhead in total. Jesus does something glory worthy, and it is identical that God has done it as well. Each member of the Trinity is actively participating in the activity of the others - God is One.

The next two statements are two halves mirroring the first two reversed. This forms a chiasm. An X-like grammatical structure. “If” in verse 32, is more like “When,” but without the time element. We could say that whenever, and therefore when, God is glorified by what Jesus does, God gives His glory to Jesus, which has the net effect of God giving Himself glory. That might seem self-serving, but God cannot lie and to say otherwise would be a lie. Remember His opinion is objective reality.

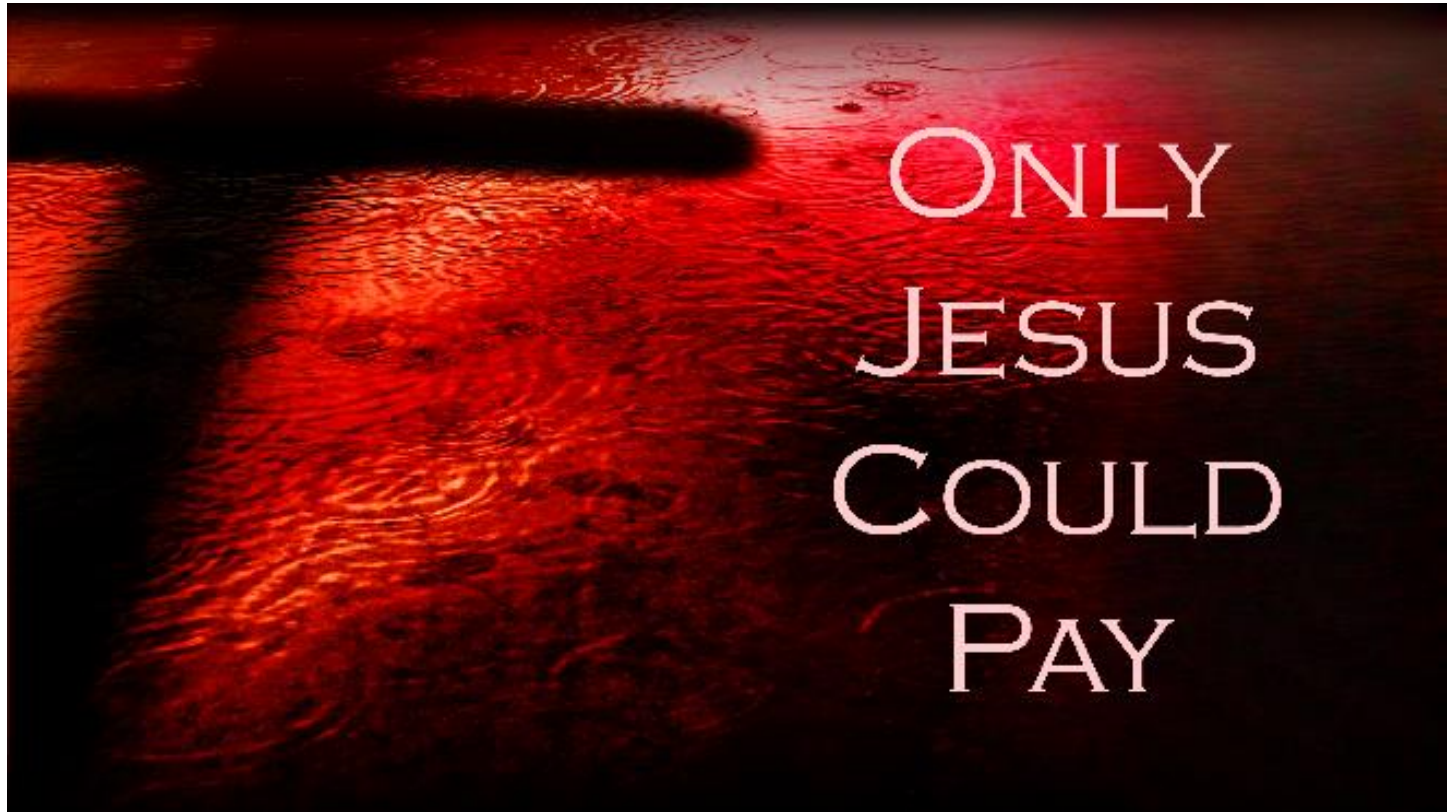
The fifth statement amplifies and expands the initial word “Now,” in the first statement. The time has come and yet, the time has always, and will always, be. It’s very difficult for us to conceive of timelessness, especially if there were never any linear timeline as a referent.



God, without beginning or end did create a linear timeline and put it in a box that we call the universe. An imperfect analogy could be the idea that a timeless being, like God, could connect to His timeline in a box and remain in one particular moment in that timeline - say 12 noon precisely on January 1, 1997. On our timescale He could stay frozen in that single moment for an indefinitely massive amount of time - like millions, or trillions of years, which would be no time at all to Him. He could pause without pausing. He could do that with every moment that exists on the timeline from the start of it to its end and here's the mind-bender, He could do so simultaneously. Even with all of those, seemingly infinite, moments it wouldn't take



even a moment for God to pause there as long as He wanted.



Okay, okay, I know... In verse 33, Jesus went on to talk about another aspect of His glorification, which is the fact that His friends could not follow Him where He was going. He addressed His guys as “Little children,” which is as affectionately condescending as you think. It lets them know that He deeply cares for them, but that they also have much to learn.

They cannot come where He is going because He and only He can die for the sins of the world. And so, obviously, they will remain and since that’s the case, Jesus brings up the third related idea which is to give

the Apostles their marching orders for when He'll be away from them.

Jesus could have given any instructions that He wanted here. Papyrus and ink weren't cheap, but they could have wrangled a bit more if the Son of Man wanted to lay out a point-by-point instruction manual for His church. There was only one command that Jesus gave, and it is not only a summation of the 10 Commandments and the 613 Old Testament Laws, it is a summation of the two "Greatest Commands," and the Great Commission, in the New Testament along with anything else that you can think of...

When the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords declared what He wanted His people busy doing while He was away, it was only this one thing. Because it's hard, and it's self-sacrificing, and it's scary, and mostly because we simply don't like it, we, and all the Christians before us, make Christianity about everything other than what Christ demanded it to be.



Since we're so woke around here, let's say a dude and dudette go hunting... I mean they're out there creeping around in the woods in pursuit of game, each with license in hand, both wearing their Elmer Fudd clothes, hers with pink camo, they're carrying a bunch of expensive gear, and each lugging some kind of weapon that will get the job done... but neither of them has any intention whatsoever of actually shooting at an animal - they both simply refuse to make any attempt to harvest the game that they're after... Are they true hunters?

I hope you get my point. You could have easily attended any one of over a hundred churches within

driving distance this morning. All of them will have some sort of sermon or teaching this morning and if you investigated it, you'd be amazed at the number of different topics, doctrines, and practices discussed in the scattering of churches in our valley just this morning. Yet, I sincerely doubt, that any of them will focus on actually obeying Christ's One Command that covers all of the other Commands contained in the entire Bible.



That command is, of course, "Love one another." It's very specific, it's just three words - actually only two in Greek, ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους (ä-gä-pä-tě ä-l-lā-lüs), and because of that people cannot believe that it's truly the only command that Christians are to obey. Please hear

me on this, because this is the opinion of Saint Augustine, the opinion of the Apostle Paul, and the opinion of the Lord Jesus Christ - and as God, His opinion is objective reality.

Why? Why is it the summation of the entirety of what God wants from you? To be joined voluntarily to a group of Christian people and to get along with them in all their inevitable diversity requires help from God. The reason we so rarely see it is that Christians don't beg God, on a daily basis, for His help to be unified. I guess we figure if God wants us unified, He'll make it happen. Yes, He will, but only through our active participation in the endeavor.

You can live a model Christian lifestyle, you can do all the Christian stuff that people expect, you can help the helpless, you can worship the Lord with abandon, and pray continuously, and constantly talk about Jesus to everyone you meet, all out of the strength of your flesh.

What you can't do from your own strength is to genuinely love the Christians within your church family week after week, year after year, decade after decade. Ask yourself this simple question... At the Last Supper, was Jesus aware that the 11 guys left in the room

would deal with thousands of new Christians who were both Jew and Gentile, both male and female, both slave and free? Did Jesus know that within a few short years after His sacrifice that His Bride would be made up of people from what is now Ethiopia, England, Iran, Ukraine, and everything in-between?

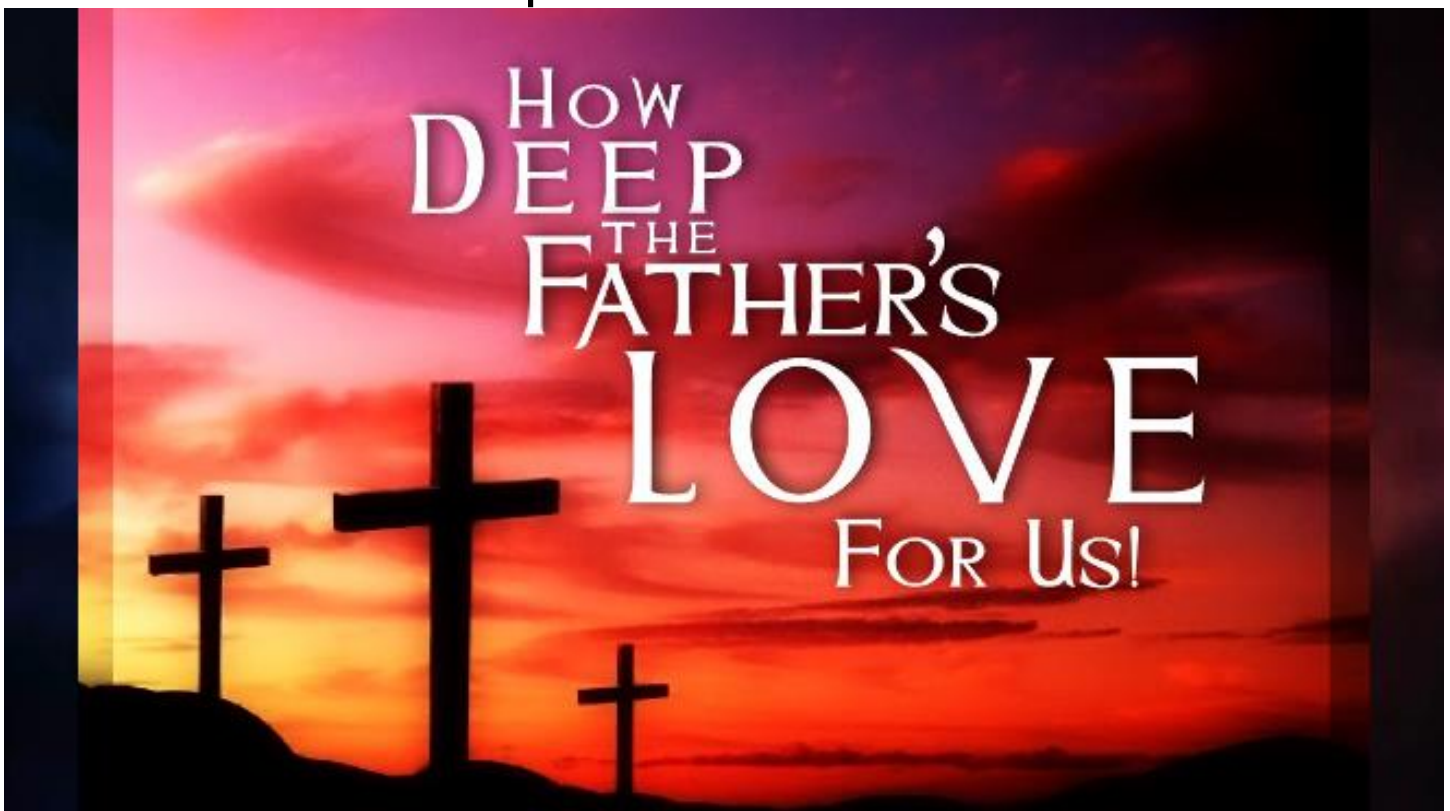


The church has always been far more eclectic than you can imagine and that's just national, cultural, racial, gender, and socio-economic diversity - what about the incredible diversity between people of the same immediate family? Mariah and I have three kids who were raised together and the differences between them is staggering. How in the world can any two people, let

alone dozens of people, get along in close proximity over time while each one is working to follow Jesus?

I'll tell you what the Bible says. It is only by the Unity of the Holy Spirit. That is just another way of saying that it is only by the Love of God that He has poured out into individual believers who then share that love generously with one another.

In order for such a thing to take place, the group must be operating in the Love, which only comes from God. As we've seen before, in order for God's Love to be effective in humans, the humans must actually receive it from God. This requires faith.



Faith is a perspective. See what I mean? Faith sees circumstances from a different vantage point than despair sees them. For a person to have God's Love overflow them to the point of overflowing onto those around them, requires actually believing that this is precisely what's happening. It is to have the perspective that I never deserved God's Love, nor will I ever be worthy of God's Love and yet He lavished His love upon me in ridiculous excess. I have no fear at all that His Love for Me will run dry - I believe that I can be as free with it to others as He was with it towards me - I have now discovered that the more of His Love you spend, the more He deposits into your heart.

When you have a group of strangers in a strange land, but they are all genuine "born again," to use Jesus' terminology, Christians, who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and have, through faith, truly accepted God's endless Love for them... Well, then you can have unity within diversity.

Truly Loving those people with whom you interact on a regular basis is what Jesus has commanded. To accomplish that means that you've already obeyed the First and Greatest Command, which is to Love God. That now goes without saying.





This practice of Loving, with God's Love, those who are within our local church family will inevitably spill the banks of that local church and extend to Christians in the universal church. By a similar mechanism, it will then extend to the lost souls who need Jesus just as desperately as you once did and so the Second Greatest Command to Love your neighbor as yourself is likewise fulfilled including the Great Commission to preach, baptize, and disciple.

Finally, there are all the myriad commands and rules and practices required... Each and everything that God wants from you is easily subsumed under this single command to Love one another. Finally, someone may

worry about sin, but what Jesus would tell you is that it is impossible to sin by commission, or omission, if you are operating in His Love.

Name any sin and then explain to me how that sin can be accomplished by a person operating in the Agapê Love of God. Think of the command not to take from another... It can be taking their trust as in lying to them, it can be taking their life as in murdering them, it can be taking their possessions as in robbery or burglary, it can be taking their good name as in slandering or gossiping... Can you do any of that if you Love the other person unconditionally?

Love for one another is to be tangible vis-à-vis the foot washing done by Jesus, but far more, the Cross. I'm confident that the reason Jesus gave the enacted illustration of service through foot washing is because the Cross would be too easy to dismiss as something only Jesus could do. Well, anyone can wash someone else's feet.

Love one another is the "what we are to do." Through faith in God's Love is the "how we are to do it." The degree to which we are to do it is "just as I (Jesus) have loved you, that you also love one another."

People secretly loathe the command and so they try to redefine the terms. What did Jesus mean by “Love”? What did He mean by “one another,” who is “one another”? Jesus made it absolutely clear. We are to love those whom Jesus loves in the same way and to the same degree that He loves us.

The “Love” that He spoke of is seen in the foot washing and in taking your sin to the Cross laying down His life so that you might live. The “one another” are the people within the church whether you like them or not, whether you agree with them or not, whether you think that they are the betrayer or not. None of that is for you to figure out - your job, if you’re a Christian is to serve them with God’s Love and let Him sort it out at the end!

Finally, we get to the why we are to do it. “By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.” There is the Great Commission. The purpose of our intense unbreakable unity in the Spirit is so the lost, fallen and depraved world would see that God truly does make His home among men. It is to God’s great Glory and it is the way He has chosen to build His Kingdom on earth.



And what do we the church - the people so blessed and so commanded do with all of that? We fuss and fight, squabble and dispute, over ridiculous issues that will not matter at the end of the day.



Oh, I can't worship with people who believe that - I can't worship with people that condone this, I can't... My dear friends, one day, far sooner than you can imagine, you will get to explain your reasoning to Jesus face-to-face.

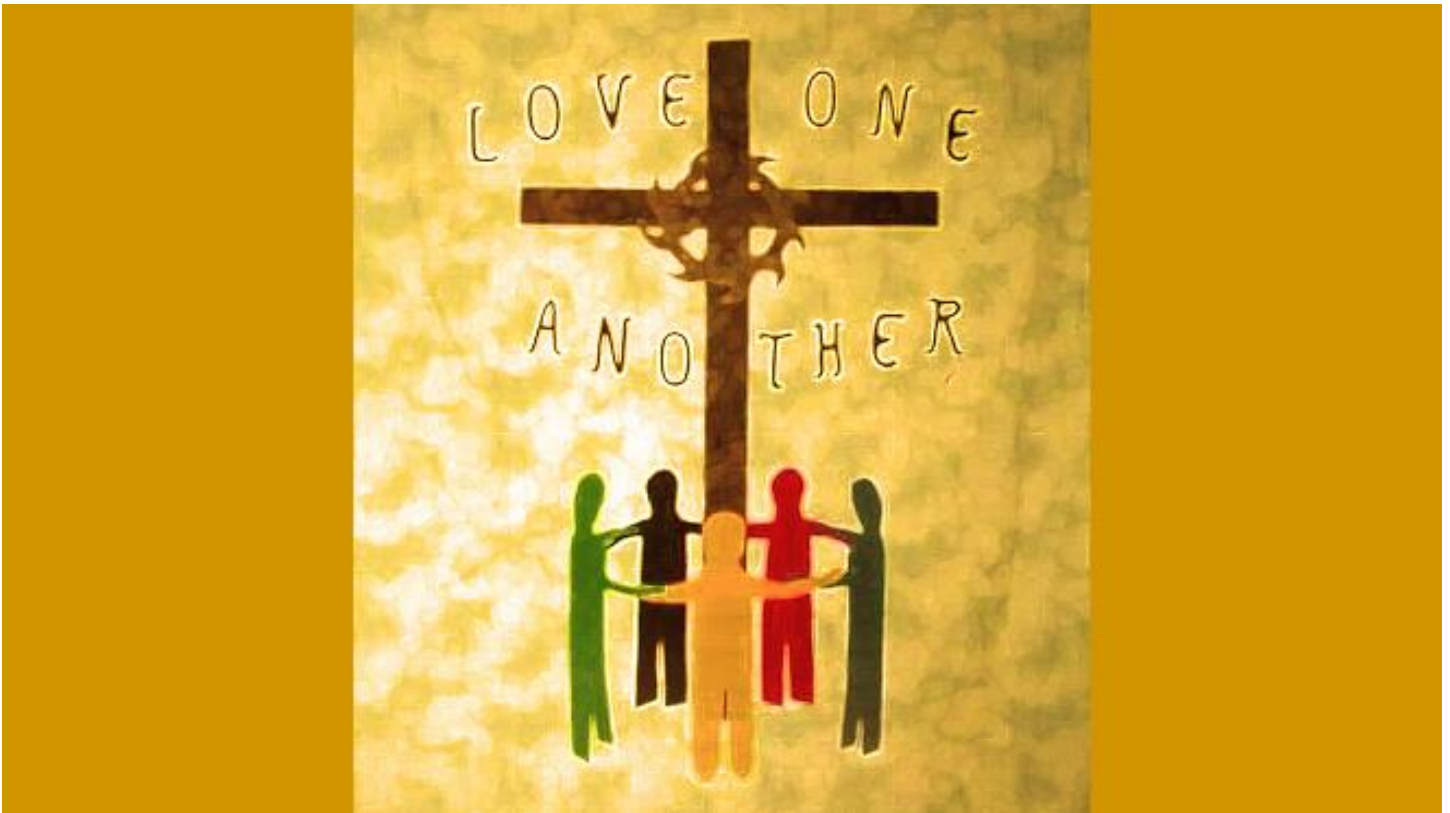
As for me and my house... Well, we choose to serve the Lord by doing everything we can to simply obey Him as well as we can by Loving you lot with the Love that He's given.

In what is incredibly predictable human stupidity, Simon Peter, representing Christians throughout time said, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where

I am going, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.” 37Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.” 38Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.

The first glaringly human, self-centered, self-aggrandizement, Peter completely ignores the command that Jesus just gave. Yeah, yeah, love other, sure, but what’s this about you going where I, I, I, I, cannot follow? We’ll pick up the story there the next time we’re together, Lord willing. In the meantime, I hope you can see that from the moment the command left Jesus’ lips His people have been trying to minimize the implications.

We’d far rather attend church, jump through religious hoops, light candles, give money, study the Bible, enroll in classes, read self-help books masquerading as Christian teaching, whatever it might be - but wash someone else’s feet repeatedly, consistently, over decades, when they don’t deserve it, don’t appreciate it, don’t reciprocate it - there must be some kind of mistake. Can I just take an “F” in this subject and make it up in another area?



What I've been trying to tell you is that this is not a subject area, this is the whole thing. Love one another or die... Probably, die.