

Sermon: *How to Glorify God*
Text: *John 13:31 – 35*
Date: *May 2, 2010 AM*
Place: *Jesup First UMC*

It was the discovery that shook humanity to the very core of our existence. For thousands and thousands of years, we were confident that earth was the center of the universe, that everything – Sun, Moon, and Stars – revolved around the earth, and at the very center of it all was ... us! And then, in 1543, Copernicus told the world that wasn't true. Earth is not the center of the Universe. And then, 50 years later, Galileo came along and said that earth and all the other planets revolved around the sun, that the sun – not the earth – is the center of the universe.

Now, that was a hard pill to swallow, especially for the church. In fact, Galileo was thrown into prison and excommunicated from the church for his discovery ... and all because we just couldn't accept the fact that we are not the center of creation. And yet, Revelation 4:11 clearly says: *“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things and they exist for your pleasure.”* In other words, creation revolved around God!

God is the center of creation! Or another way of saying that is: Creation exists to glorify God. The Psalmist said: *“The heavens declare the glory of God.”* Elsewhere, we are told that the universe declares the majesty of God. And yet, there is only one thing in all of creation that was uniquely created to reflect the image of God and to declare His glory and that is ... you and me. It was God who said: *“Let us make man in our own image.”*

God made us to bring honor and glory to Himself. And He redeemed us from slavery to sin and death to bring honor and glory to Himself. Listen to Paul's charge to the church at Corinth: "For you were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit which belong to God."¹ That simply means that there is something about humanity that is meant to point to the reality of God's presence in the world and cause everyone to honor God for who God is!

Now, the question is: how? How do we bring honor and glory to God? Well, listen again to Jesus' words in John 13: "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him ... by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." So, this morning, as we prepare ourselves for Holy Communion, I want us to reflect together on just two ways that you and I bring honor and glory to God.

First, we glorify God by knowing God's Love! John 13 is a record of the events and conversation that took place in the Upper Room on the last night of Jesus' life. And John tells us in verse 1: "Having loved His own ... He showed them the full extent of His love" by getting up from the table and washing their feet. In order that they would know the reality of His love for them in all its fullness, He washed their feet!

Then, later, as they were eating the Passover, He took the bread and said: "This is my body which is given for you." And then, He took the cup and said: "This is my blood which is poured out for you." You see, there is something about Jesus' suffering and death that –

beyond the blood and guts – uniquely reveals the love that God has for us. In the cross, we see love demonstrated. I John 4 says: **“In this is the love of God manifested, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”**

The universal symbol of love isn't a red heart, but an old rugged cross. Now, we have a sacrament to help us remember what He did for us that Friday afternoon. Jesus said: **“Do this in remembrance of me.”** And so, every time you and I come to the Table, we come to remember and we, as United Methodists, believe that something special happens. As we come to the Table, remembering Jesus' suffering and death and seeking His forgiveness, we receive His grace. Our founder, John Wesley, taught us that Holy Communion is a means, a channel, through which we receive God's unmerited favor and unconditional love.

We glorify God by knowing God's love!

Second, we glorify God by showing God's Love! Verse 35 says: **“By this will all people know you are my disciples ... if you love one another.”** Now, it was common at the celebration of the Passover to have what the Jews called “*places of honor.*” And you and I would expect that Jesus would have had one of those places. But Jesus' glory wasn't found sitting at the head of the table; it was found kneeling at the feet of the disciples. That's how He showed them His love!

So, how do we show our love for one another? Well, we show love through acts of kindness. I Peter 2 says: **“Live such good lives among the pagans that,**

though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God.

A pastor took Helen (age 8) and Brandon (age 5) to the mall one day. And as they drove up, they spotted an 18 wheeler outside with a big sign on it that read: "Petting Zoo." And he hoped Helen didn't see it, but sure enough, she started begging: "*Daddy, Daddy. Can we go? Please. Please. Can we go?*"

Well, he reached in his pocket and gave them both a dollar and off they went to the petting zoo. And a few minutes later, Helen came walking back by herself. And the pastor leaned over and picked her up and said: "*Helen, what's wrong, honey?*" She said: "*Oh nothing, daddy. The Zoo costs \$2. So I let Brandon have my dollar too, because I really love him.*" Love, in Helen's eyes, was found in a simple act of kindness.

And we show love by offering forgiveness. Perhaps the greatest thing we can do for one another is to truly forgive one another. Paul told the Church at Ephesus: "*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.*" And so, in our communion liturgy, we come before the Lord's Table and we confess our sins before God and one another; and then ... we offer to one another the gift of forgiveness, "*In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.*" And we exchange symbols of our forgiveness and reconciliation by passing the peace. That's love ... looking beyond the faults and failures, the sins and shortcomings and recognizing our unity in Christ.

“By this will all people be able to recognize you: if you love one another.” We bring glory and honor to God by knowing God’s love and by showing God’s love to others. Let me ask you one final question this morning: Does your life glorify God? Do other people come to know God because of your love?

Oh God, let it be so. And let it be so among us!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

¹ I Corinthians 6:20