

Reflection on John 13: 31-35

This passage introduces what is commonly called the “farewell discourse,” in which Jesus announces his impending death to his disciples and offers both comfort and instructions for how they should behave when he is gone.

In verses 31-33, he emphasizes glorification: the enduring and mystical relationship between the Son and God the father. He calls the disciples “little children,” highlighting his oneness with the Father. At the same time, this term of endearment expresses his love for them. Here he turns to two additional themes of his ministry: the commandment to love one another and the Father’s presence in the disciples. “You will look for me,” he says, possibly to tell them of new ways in which they will find him after his departure.

He refers to the Jews, in contrast to his disciples, the Jewish followers of Jesus, and emphasizes how his own followers shall be known: by their love for him, which mirrors his love for them. It is essential that the community of followers of Jesus demonstrate God’s love as a shining light for the world to see.

- Glorification can mean either giving praise or the manifestation of that which is worthy of praise. The words “glorify” and “glorified” appear five times. What does Jesus mean by the word? Does the word “now” change or clarify Jesus’ meaning?
- This passage contains the famous words: “I give you a new commandment.” What is new about the commandment to love one another? What is radically new about the way that God has shown his love for us in Jesus? What does it mean to be a disciple under this new commandment?