

Fifth Sunday of Easter - May 15, 2022, Year C  
**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: John 13:31-35

***"If You Love One Another"***

The Holy Gospel reading takes place in the upper room on that Thursday night, where the Apostles and Jesus celebrated the Passover Seder meal. The Gospel begins with the words "*When he was gone, Jesus said;*" Were you wondering who he was? The he was Judas. Judas had just left the upper room and he went to go do what he had been given 30 pieces of silver to do. Jesus told him "*what you are about to do, do quickly*" (John 13:27) and that would be to betray Jesus with a kiss.

Then Jesus was comfortable enough to address the other eleven, and Jesus said, "*Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.*" (John 13:31-32) Jesus knows full well what is ahead of Him, and so He speaks of being glorified. This is only the second time that Jesus spoke of "*the Son of Man*" being glorified. The first was in John 12:23 when Jesus said, "*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*" Before this Jesus had spoken of God the Father being glorified and of the "*Son of Man*" being lifted up, meaning being on the cross. In the first century Israel the words to "glorify" means to exalt by completing the given task. It is always good to know the context of how words are being used. The scope and wonder of God's marvelous plan of salvation will only be apparent with Jesus' arrest, His suffering, death, and resurrection. I believe that Jesus was overwhelmed with glory, with the coming events as the unveiling of God's glory, with His own mission finally coming toward its conclusion, and so in doing this He would be bringing God the Father the glory. Jesus knew that very soon He would be leaving His Apostles and His disciples behind as He moved closer and closer to the cross. If you come to think about it, Jesus is just hours away from His own death.

It seems to me that only around Easter time is the life of Jesus and His sacrifice remembered in the news media, and unfortunately on the minds of very few. People are more concerned with the latest TV series and what is happening with it. Folks glorify sports teams and their players, but don't have time for Jesus. In my heart I know that Jesus is always glorified, and I pray that He is on your hearts too. My point is the media and the masses' priorities are not focused on holy things, they are not focused on Jesus but on a lot of other things. Just watch the news, and I don't care which news, which channel, nobody is talking about Jesus very much. Isn't that sad!

Jesus knows on that Thursday night, the events that are coming for Him, and He tells His apostles warmly and lovingly, in a way that reflects their relationship with one another: "*My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.*" (John 13:33) In just a little while Jesus will repeat this message, telling them more about His destination in John 14. Jesus' words are filled with promise and truth when He tells them, "*In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be*

where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." (John 14:2-7) That last verse is so very important – because most times people will stop with “I am the way and the truth and the life,” and sometimes will include, “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Most people don’t usually add, “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” I think that is very important because that is talking about relationship. If you don’t know someone, how can you have a relationship with them? But if you do know someone intimately, you can have a very strong and wonderful relationship. In other words Jesus was saying ‘right here – you are looking at God.’ Jesus promises that they will not be alone, that He will come back for them and take them that they will always be with Him. Thomas pipes up that they don’t know the way, and Jesus fills them and all believers with those special words that fully reveal just who He is and how He and the Father are One! I can’t help but think of the prayer that is called the Shema, that should be ingrained in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people, as well as on their door posts, rolled up as a small scroll and placed in a mezuzah. It is Deuteronomy 6:4-6 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.” That is God speaking to Moses in Deuteronomy. Think about that – the Lord our God is One. It can mean that there is one God, but that is the position in our lives that God is supposed to take. He is supposed to be first in our lives.

On that night, Jesus had something special to give to the Apostles besides the gift of His Body and Blood in the Eucharist at the Last Supper Seder meal. Jesus gives them the simplest, clearest, and truly the hardest command of all - as a new Commandment that is to go along with the Shema, that is straight from God’s words in Leviticus 19:18 in which God tells Moses: “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD” And so Jesus tells His Apostles, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35) This just might be the hardest thing for them to follow, because Jesus is telling them, and all of His believers, to copy Him – which is virtually impossible, but we are to try.

At the very beginning of each Holy Eucharist service we have incorporated Jesus’ words and these two commands as recorded in Matthew 22:37-40. You know these, and just heard them: “Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.””

Fifth Sunday of Easter - May 15, 2022, Year C

Let's face it, love is all about what we give and do for another person. Think about that. You can be in love, but you are not in love with yourself, at least I hope you are not. If you love someone else then don't you really want to do what is best for that person, giving a part of yourself for that person? Selfless and unconditional love overflows into service, not in order to show off how hard working it is, but because true love for one another is its natural form. Everything we think do and say is for that person while we are with them. If you are really in love – then you are thinking about that person even when you are not with them, even all the more. It would be my prayer that the Gospel would be an example of a love like no other that begins with God and extends to our neighbors.

I ask you to remember Jesus' words from today's Holy Gospel and how they give us strength, hope, and courage to do just what He commands: "*By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*" (John 13:35) The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the people of Corinth, and they complement Jesus' words and those of the Old Testament as he wrote, "*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*" (1 Corinthians 13:13) By the grace of God, may we do our best to put these words into action – and through our love, be fully focused on the One who loves us, Jesus.