

Glory in the Cross of Jesus

HN/SS 26/2/06 am

Reading: Isaiah 53, John 17

Study Text: John 13:31-32

Sing Psalms: 96:1-5, 96:6-9, 145^{2nd}:1-6, 145^{2nd}:9-14

Judas had just gone out from the room where Jesus was celebrating the Passover with his disciples. He had gone out into the night to betray Jesus into the hands of his enemies – his enemies who were seeking to kill him. Jesus knew that within a short time he would be in the hands of these enemies. This time he would not escape from their hands, for he knew that his hour had come. He would be arrested, mocked, humiliated and then condemned to death.

I found it difficult watching the trials in Bali recently. I did not want to hear any more – it was so tragic. Headline after headline declared ‘condemned to death’. There were these foolish young men standing trial, and being sentenced to life imprisonment or death. Was there anything worthy of praise in this sad scene? Is there ever anything praiseworthy about death?

As Jesus watched his betrayer leave he said *Now the Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in him* (13:31). How amazing. This is incredible. This man was condemned to death yet spoke of being glorified, and of God be glorified in him. Was he crazy? Was he speaking nonsense? Many think so. Many think the Cross of Christ to be foolishness. Many, even some who call themselves Christians, are embarrassed by the Cross, seeing it a symbol of shame and defeat.

But Jesus Christ was a man like no other. This was a death like no other. This death would have ramifications through all the earth and in heaven also. This was the Son of God and the Son of Man going to his death. ‘Whenever we think of Christ’s suffering, we never know what to admire most: whether it be the voluntary self-surrender of the Son to such a death for such people, or the willingness of the Father to give up such a Son to such a death for such people’.

Reading the word ‘glorify’ in this context we might even think Jesus is talking about something different to what we understand by glorify. What does glorify mean? In the Old Testament the people knew the glory of God, the *shekhina* glory that surrounded his throne. Moses asked the Lord – *please show me your glory* (Exodus 33:18), but was told *no man shall see my face and live*. And in the New Testament the apostle Paul found the words of the Jeremiah fitting as he declared *let him who glories, glory in the Lord* (I Corinthians 1:31) and *God forbid that I should boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Galatians 6:14).

The word glorify in our passage is in the aorist or past tense (lit. ‘was glorified’). This may seem strange for referring to something that has not yet happened, but for Jesus the Cross was so soon and so sure that he could speak of it as already having already happened.

The Son Is Glorified

Jesus left the glory of his throne in heaven to come into this fallen world (Revelation 21:23). He humbled himself to become a man – like us in every way but without sin. It was not easy

being tempted by Satan, being despised and rejected by men. Jesus looked to his Father in his last hour and prayed *Father glorify me together with yourself with the glory which I had with you before the world was* (17:5). He was looking forward to returning to that heavenly glory.

Death was the door by which Jesus would re-enter the glory of heaven. He knew he had come from heaven and that he was returning there. Yet this was not the all that Jesus was thinking of as he spoke of being glorified. By his death he would open the door not just for himself but for all mankind to enter into the glory of heaven. Jesus said *I am the door – if anyone enters by me he will be saved* (6:9). This is the glory of the Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The incarnate Son of God revealed the glory of God (1:14), not only as he was transfigured on the mountain (Luke 9:27f), but in his very life and ministry – and ultimately and supremely in his death. His unwavering obedience to his Father and his persistent and patient love for men whom the Father gave him, brought glory to both Jesus and his Father.

I have glorified you on earth; I have finished the work which you gave me to do (17:4). The glory of Jesus came from his perfect obedience to the Father. If Adam had obeyed we would not be in the plight we are today. If we could perfectly obey God we would also be able to say ‘I have glorified you on earth’. How the Father loves those who obey him – they bring him such glory. By the grace of Jesus, Paul could say *I have finished the race; I have kept the faith* (II Timothy 4:7). What about you?

Jesus knew he had been sent into this world to die. Early in his ministry he spoke about being ‘lifted up’ (3:14, 8:28). He also spoke about his hour that had not yet come. The Son of man *came to give his life a ransom for many* he said (Mark 10:45). Jesus never doubted the declared will of his Father, and he never rebelled against this divine will.

The Son of Man was the only man ever to have lived in perfect obedience to the will of God. Moses was a man who knew God face to face, but he sinned. David was a man after God’s own heart, but he sinned. Every human being falls short of the glory of God. Only Jesus lived to glorify God by his perfect obedience – even when that obedience meant death, death on the Cross.

The **love** of Jesus was also unique and something which brought glory to God. He had just demonstrated something of that love in washing the feet of his disciples. He told his disciples *to love one another as I have loved you. By this we know what love is, Jesus Christ laid down his life for us* (I John 3:16). In love Jesus healed many who were sick, he fed multitudes that were hungry and even raised those who had died. But that was not the full extent of his love. He did this by his word, just as he created all things by his word (Colossians 1:16). His perfect love was revealed, with all glory to the Father and the Son, when he gave his life that we might live.

The love of Jesus dwarfs even the greatest love demonstrated by any man or woman in the history of the world. Truly he could say ‘the Son of Man is glorified’ as he went to the Cross to lay down his life for you and me. Let us glorify him today and every day for his love, and for his obedience, which took him to that cruel Cross. *He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him* (II Corinthians 5:21).

Glory of God

God is glorified in him and God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him immediately (13:32). This whole plan of redemption was contrived in the mind and heart of Almighty God – of *Elohim* and *Yahweh* – the God of creation and the God of redemption. It was contrived in the very beginning.

It was in place when the Lord God said to the serpent or Satan in the garden ‘the seed of the woman shall bruise your head’ (Genesis 3:15). It was in place when the Lord God spoke to Abraham saying ‘in your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed’ (Genesis 22:18). It was in place when the Lord God told David that he would establish his throne forever (2Sam 7:16). The Cross was in the plan of God as revealed in all the Scriptures. This plan shows God’s

Holiness – when our first parents sinned they were cast out of the garden, out of the presence of the holy God. Sin separated man from God. God is holy and cannot allow sin in his presence. The veil in the temple symbolised this separation. For man to be brought back or redeemed he must somehow be made holy.

Love – even though cast out because of sin, God did not abandon those whom he made in his own image. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son (3:16). *This is love not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins* (I John 4:10).

Wisdom – God set the idea of substitution in place under the Old Covenant. He commanded animals to be sacrificed and their blood sprinkled before his presence on the altar to make atonement for sin. *Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness* (Hebrews 9:22). But the blood of bulls and goats could never atone for the sin of man. Only the blood of the Lamb of God could take away the sin of the world.

Power – The blood of Jesus Christ is powerful to cleanse our hearts from sin, and with clean hearts we are able to enter into the presence of God. Jesus opened the door that was closed by sin and we can enter into the presence of his glory in and through Jesus Christ.

What a perfect plan of salvation God devised, and executed in his own Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. No wonder Jesus could say – *Now the Son of man is glorified and God is glorified in him*. The holy and just God remained holy and just, even as he justified sinners and made them holy in Jesus Christ.

How true are the words of the apostle – *Oh the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God* (Romans 11:33). Even the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom (I Corinthians 1:25). *For of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be the glory for ever, Amen* (Romans 11:36).

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