

Gospel of John, chapter 13 verses 31 – 35:-

When reading this passage we need to be aware that it is part of a long narrative covering the time spent by the Lord Jesus Christ with the disciples “*during supper*” (chapter 13, verse 2) through to the move “*across the Kidron valley, where there was a garden,*” (chapter 18, verse 1). It is worthwhile reading and meditating on the whole of this passage as well as concentrating on the few verses selected for this week’s Reading.

Chapter 13, verse 31 - 32:- The words “*When he had gone out*” refer to Judas Iscariot the betrayer – chapter 13, verses 21 – 30. Once the informer had gone out, the Lord Jesus could speak confidently of the coming events. The narrative from this point on is the dialogue between the Lord Jesus and the eleven remaining disciples (the Apostles).

“*Now is the Son of Man glorified and in him God is glorified*”. For the author of the Gospel, the ‘glorification’ of the Lord Jesus Christ was in his passion and crucifixion. The great act in human redemption came when “*He himself carried our sins up to and on to the tree*” (1 Peter chapter 2, verse 24 – literal translation). It was in this act that the message of the angels at the nativity was made a reality - “*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.*” (Luke chapter 2, verse 14). Remember too that this was the act of God Himself! “*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,*” 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 19.

Verse 33:- The words “*Little children*” is a phrase often used in the ‘Letters of John’ (see for example 1 John chapter 2, verse 1). The glorification of the Lord Jesus means separation from the disciples. He will go where they cannot follow, He will again be at his Father’s side. He will then have the status of ‘Lord’ and no longer wear the mantle of a slave. Although they cannot follow him now, in chapter 14 we find the promise that they, and we, shall be with him where he is: see John chapter 14, verses 1 – 3.

Verses 34 – 35:- The familiar words of the ‘New Commandment’! Remember that the commandment to love was written into the Mosaic Law. “*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*” - Leviticus chapter 19, verse 18. The love commanded here by the Lord Jesus is the kind of love with which he loved us. It is the kind of love which will reverse roles bringing the leader to serve as a slave, and the innocent to serve as the guilty. A love that, like Christ’s love for his own, does not ask questions about worthiness, but simply gives itself in humble service. A love that, although it may not be reciprocated, is given unconditionally.

“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another”

*Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, love divine;
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and angels gave the sign.*

*Worship we the Godhead,
Love incarnate, Love divine;
Worship we our Jesus:
But wherewith the sacred sign?*

*Love shall be our token,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.*

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830 - 1894)