

“The Center of it All” (Jn. 13:31-38)

1. Hidden Glory (31-32)

a. Son of Man

- i. Dan. 7 the Son of Man is the exalted divine One who ascends to the Ancient of Days (vv. 13-14).
- ii. Synoptics the Son of Man is assoc. w/ suffering, betrayal, servanthood as well as authority.
- iii. In our passage in John, Jesus speaks of Himself as Son of Man who will be glorified via His atoning act of suffering.
- iv. So too of note is Isaiah’s collection of “Servant Songs” where the Servant (Israel) is chosen, commissioned, suffers, and makes atonement for His people.
 1. The Servant’s Election 42:1-7
 2. The Servant’s Mission 49:1-7
 3. The Servant’s Passion 50:4-9
 4. The Servant’s Substitution 52:13-53:12

b. Glorified

- i. It is noted that what Jesus was about to accomplish (in His hour) was the most profound, glorious, exhibition of power, love, righteousness, and sacrifice. It was the greatest event and accomplishment in the history of the universe past, present, and future.
- ii. The crux of God’s plan was met at the Cross of Christ! 2 Cor. 5:19, 21.
- iii. Jesus proved triumphant in the Garden, at the Cross, and over the grave!

2. Love’s Journey (33)

- a. David Gooding wrote regarding this passage: “For ‘God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.... For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life’ (Rom 5:8, 10). And right down to us in our century comes God’s call through Christ’s apostles: ‘We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God’ (2 Cor 5:20–21). If after that, people take all the Creator’s natural gifts, but reject the sop of his friendship, they will, like Judas, go out into a night of eternal darkness where the light of God’s friendship never comes and the awareness of his holiness burns like an unquenchable fire. But they will have only themselves to blame.”¹
- b. Love doesn’t deny goodness but neither will it demand it. Rather it commands it.
- c. This verse echoes 7:33-34 (read). The Jews speculated what Jesus might have meant (35).
- d. They could not follow reminds me of Matt. 20:20-23 about the cup.
- e. They would be martyred but they could not atone for sin nor ascend as Jesus.

3. New Commandment (34-35)

- a. Not new as juxtaposed to the Law but expounded Law fulfilling it (see Ro. 13:8-10).
- b. “As I have loved you” = extreme love. The highest extent of love (cf. Jn. 15:13).
- c. Witness of love: David Gooding again offers helpful commentary, “And people at large still recognize true Christians by this test. They may know very little Christian doctrine or theology. But they know the kind of love Christ stood for and expressed. And if they find people who profess to be Christians persecuting each other, using the secular powers of the

¹ Gooding, D. (2013). *In the School of Christ: Lessons on Holiness in John 13–17* (pp. 62–63). Coleraine, Northern Ireland: Myrtlefield House.

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State to discriminate against those who differ with them on points of doctrine, and even fighting civil wars against each other and practising genocide, the world will come to its own conclusion that such people are not Christians at all.”²

4. Jesus’ Power (36-38)

- a. Outlines are helpful when they emerge from the text. I could have very well used this more consistent outline:
 - i. Jesus’ Glory (31-32)
 - ii. Jesus’ Journey (33)
 - iii. Jesus’ Command (34-35)
 - iv. Jesus’ Power (36-38)
- b. This final point could be e.g. “Peter’s Weakness” or “Our Inadequacy” or something negative – and I have used negative headings and even ended with negative headings. Nevertheless, what sticks out to me here is Jesus sufficiency and power to predict, assure, and overcome.
- c. As per usual, Peter gets a main point yet fails to get the full picture. Jesus does assure Peter that, indeed, he will follow but not just yet (36).
- d. Peter actually initially kept his word and not only drew but swung his sword lopping off a soldier’s ear (Jn. 18:10).
- e. Sure, we could see Peter’s weakness in his three denials before the roster crowed. But because of the love, power, and knowledge of the LORD, Peter was restored and became a supernaturally bold witness against the State and established religious leaders of the day.
- f. So again, Jesus’ power is displayed in that:
 - i. He prophesied Peter’s thrice denial but then return v. 36 cf. Lu. 22:31-32.
 - ii. He triumphed with love, offering that assurance of restoration.
 - iii. He is able to keep His own from Satan although we are weak (again, Lu. 22:31-32).
- g. Gooding once again articulated this reality brilliantly. “There follows now a lesson which it is moderately easy to agree with in theory but much more difficult to face when we discover its truth in practical experience. The lesson is this: however grateful to the Lord we may be for what he has done for us, and however determined we may be to love, obey, and follow him, our love and determination are not enough in themselves to keep us following him as we should. Indeed we have hidden weaknesses within us which, were we dependent solely on our own resources, would easily ruin the whole procedure completely.
- h. Of course, every believer will unhesitatingly agree that he is still imperfect and sins from time to time; but almost unconsciously many of us assume that, given adequate determination, care, and effort, we can manage by ourselves to overcome or suppress our sins and achieve the desired standard of holiness. It just is not true. Sin has sapped our strength and damaged our moral fibre more than we think; and it can be a bitter experience when repeated failure makes us face this unpleasant and disturbing fact.”³
- i. Romans 7 comes before Romans 8. We learn the struggle of the flesh and spirit but we also know that in Christ alone are we liberated, enabled, and secure!
- j. Center of it all. Jesus’ Glory in life and death and resurrection and ascension. Jesus’ perfect love. Jesus’ perfect power. Jesus’ person, purity, power, and purpose is the center of life, time, and the universe!

² Ibid. 70.

³ Ibid. 71.