

5-19-19 John 13: 31-35 & Acts 14: 21-27

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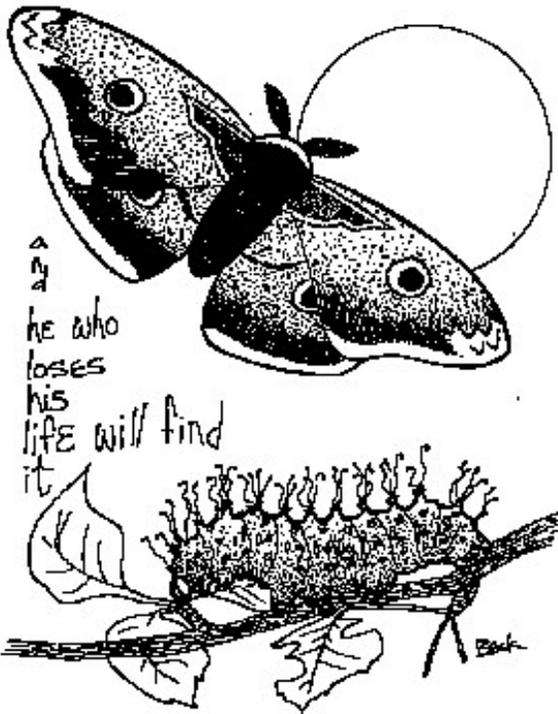
Fr. Robert Beck ([subscription](#))

Stone, Naomi. [Prayer For Love](#)

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TERING THE SCENE:

One of the mysteries of life is that one way of life seems to die in order for a new and higher form of life can begin. It is only after the caterpillar leaves the cocoon that it can fly and see that what it was, would only be preparation for what will be. It is little wonder that the poor disciples felt like the caterpillars, as Jesus soared above them as a beautiful butterfly. Jesus' faith in the Resurrection overcame all his reluctance to making this trip through death for all of us. As a man, he leads us all through yet another birth canal called death to life, and his trust in God's unconditional love is the midwife to this new life.

John 13:31-35

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the **Son of Man** has been glorified, and **God** has been glorified in him. ³² If **God** has been glorified in him, **God** will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³

Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Our ability to love one another is Jesus criteria for discipleship. How is being aware of God's love for you helping you love others?

PRAYER: Teacher Jesus, your lesson today is "love one another as I have loved you." Every now and then I get a glimpse of the kind of love you talk about and it draws me on toward you. In those brief experiences of "glory" I recognize the truth that you lived and died for. It helps me reorient myself and gives me the ability to look at those you put in my life with a new appreciation of what love truly is. Amen

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

SON OF MAN: Jesus totally identified with humanity and used this designation for himself most often.

How do I understand this self-designation? Does it help me to connect with Jesus?

GLORIFIED / GLORIFY: In the Old Testament the word for God's glory was *Shekinah*. It was the word for God's presence made visible in mighty acts of history or nature. It was often imaged as a cloud. Now in the New Testament, God's presence and mighty acts in the world is Jesus.

How do I conceive of God's glory? When I realize that I am loved, do I experience glory? Have I ever thought that God glories in me as God does in Jesus?

GOD: Jesus' only reason to be with us was to point us to God. As Christians who believe in the Trinity, we often fail to think about how Jesus thought about God before there was ever the idea of the Trinity.

Jesus always referred to God as Father. What works best as I try to relate to the concept of God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)? How would I describe God to someone who did not believe in God?

AT ONCE: When we use these words we mean immediately and without any delay. Jesus experiences God's glory without having to wait until the Resurrection. He is very confident that what he is about to do is exactly what God wants him to do.

Do I think it was essential that Jesus be this confident in his truth about God's will for him? Have I ever gone ahead with something with this same confidence that God is glorified in the trust of my truth?

CHILDREN: In the original language of Jesus the word used was *tehnia*. It means *little children* or those born of God.

Since this is the only time in this gospel that Jesus uses this word for the disciples, it must have a special significance. What do I think it is?

I AM WITH YOU: Even though Jesus and the disciples were in the same room together, there was already a sense in which he was moving beyond where they were.

Have I ever been in a situation where someone I loved dearly is preparing to leave and they promised to hold me in their hearts? What memories do I have about that moment? What was going on in the hearts of the disciples?

LITTLE LONGER: Jesus was on the threshold of leaving by way of his death, Resurrection and Ascension. The disciples were full of anxiety. They must of have been engraving each word on their hearts for future reference.

How do I listen when I know that someone is leaving, compared to when I expect them to be around for a long time? When this gospel was written long after the events, do I think that this attention helped them remember?

LOOK FOR ME: Already, before his death, Jesus was preparing the disciples for what was to come. We know that on Easter morning no one was looking for Jesus because they saw him die. After the Resurrection experiences they must have begun to understand what he was telling them that night.

Am I looking for the pre-Resurrection Jesus or the post-Resurrection Jesus? How do I know the difference?

JEWS: Prior to the destruction of the temple, one could be both a Jew and a Christian. When this gospel was written the distinction between Jews and Christians had been made. John's gospel was dealing with the trauma that this division was causing.

Have I ever lived through a time where people had to take sides on something? What problems did this set in motion? How does this affect John's telling of the story?

GOING: It must have been alarming to the disciples to hear Jesus say that he was going somewhere without them.

When was the last time someone left me before I thought I could make it on my own? How has that worked out?

CANNOT COME: Jesus is going through a change of state as he moves into his death. All those who go through the door of death are going somewhere we cannot come until our own death.

Have I ever had to leave behind people because I was in a place that they were not prepared to go as yet? What was it like? How can this remembered experience help me to understand Jesus? The disciples?

COMMANDMENT: Jesus uses a strong word here when he uses commandment. It leaves no doubt that this is a very important. Love is the very essence of what he is all about.

When was the last time I used the word commandment? Did the people I was talking to realize the importance of what I was saying?

LOVE ONE ANOTHER: This was to be the new way that God was to be revealed in the world. God's people would be identified by the way they loved one another.

Could people identify me as one of God's people because of the way I love them?

AS I HAVE LOVED YOU: Jesus' love was the way humanity was called to love.

How did Jesus' way of loving change the way people understood God? Do I think that we would be believers today if the early believers had not tried to love as Jesus taught them to love?

EVERYONE WILL KNOW: Sharing love would be the way others would identify God's people from now on.

Who the people who know I are a Christian because of the way I love them?

DISCIPLES: A disciple is one who is in the learning process. This process contained the "discipline" of loving.

Am I a disciple of the discipline of loving?

IF: Such a tiny word, but carrying such a large meaning. This was the way that others would use to judge the authenticity of discipleship.

What ifs condition my ability to love as Jesus loves? How can accepting God's unconditional love help me love better?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Jn. 13:32 // Jn. 17:1-5; Jn. 13:33 // Jn. 7:33; 8:21; Jn. 13:34 // Jn. 15:12f; Lev. 19:18;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Acts 14:21-27; [Ps. 145: 3-13](#); Rev. 21:1-5; Jn. 13:31-35; Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 11: 1-18; [Ps. 148](#); Rev. 21:1-6; Jn. 13:31-35;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

We may not be able to love with the extravagance of Jesus Christ, but we find that, as a way of life, it is worthy to die trying.
Fr. Jonah Wharff

We cannot attain the presence of God because we're already in the presence of God. What's absent is awareness. Little do we realize that God's love is maintaining us in existence with every breath we take. As we take another, it means that God is choosing us now and now and now. We have nothing to attain or even learn. Richard Rohr

Jesus was truly free. His freedom was rooted in his spiritual awareness that he was the Beloved Child of God. He knew in the depth of his being that he belonged to God before he was born, that he was sent into the world to proclaim God's love, and that he would return to God after his mission was fulfilled. This knowledge gave him the freedom to speak and act without having to please the world and the power to respond to people's pains with the healing love of God Henri Nouwen

Deep within we long for unity because, at the most fundamental level, we are already one. We belong to one another because we have the same source of love; the love that flows through the trees is the same love that flows through my being. . . . We are deeply connected in this flow of love, beginning on the level of nature where we are the closest of kin because the earth is our mother. Ilija Delio

Love is not something you can buy, nor something you can attain or work up to, because you already have it, it is your deepest identity. It is quite simply the presence of God within you. Our word for that has been the Holy Spirit, uncreated grace, or the divine indwelling. God always loves and is forever united to this love within you. It is this that God sees in you, loves in you, and cannot reject. Richard Rohr

13:34: New commandment, the commandment (Gk "entolē," in LXX for "mitzvah," "commandment, order") is not "new" in the sense of not having been given before; Lev 19.18,34 enjoins love of one's fellow and of the stranger (see "The Concept of Neighbor," p. 540). "Hillel would say, Be of the followers of Aaron, loving peace, pursuing peace, loving your fellow human beings and bringing them to Torah" (m. Avot 1.12). Instead, it is part of the new life to which the disciples are invited (14.15; 15.12-17). 36-38: Mt 26.33-35; Mk. 14.29-30; Lk 22.33-34. 38: See 18.15-27. 14.1-16.33: Pg. 185. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

Kierkegaard made it a point to say that to love, and he is talking as a believing Christian, to love is the object of a command. The command to love comes from an Other. For K, love does not originate with us; love originates in God's initiating love. The logic of that initiating love of God for us makes it necessary that we respond by loving in our turn; God's initiating love, we might say, bears with it the command to love in our turn. Our response to God's love is an act of obedience to that command to love which God's love is that also provides us the possibility to fulfill that command. For Kierkegaard, then, as Fritz-Cates put it, our love is not a feeling and our loving is not the expression of a feeling. Love is an act of the will; love is a choice that has continually to be reaffirmed in actual loving. There is never a moment when we are not called to love. Fr. Mark Scott: Love is an Act of Will. 4/7/19

Love is saying yes to belonging. That's my definition of love, pure and simple. Anything that we call love, as far as I can see, is in some way related to this yes. . . . And that saying yes is not just an intellectual assent; it has profound moral implications. It means . . . acting the way people act when they belong together. - David Stendl-Rast

To my mind, there are few things as helpful in understanding death as is the analogy of birth, except that it's not an analogy. Seen through the eyes of faith, death is not like a birth, it is a birth: We're initially born from our mothers' wombs, into a seemingly large world, which for a time leaves us literally speechless. However, this seemingly immense world is, itself, limited and basically just another womb within which we are again being gestated and readied for birth into an even larger world which, I suspect, will, in its magnitude and beauty, leave us again mute.

And, just as initially we had to first be born before we could see our own mothers, so too we must first die, be born again, before we can see our true mother, God. After this second birth, just as after the first, we will lie open-mouthed and awe-struck before a beauty, magnitude, and love that we had never imagined.

Birth and death require the same act of faith, a trust that a fuller life and a more meaningful contact with the mother awaits us beyond the womb. Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Love must animate all things and hold all things together. Where there is no love, truth and unity are undone. It is, however, not our own human strength which can bring forth love, but only God." Bernard Haring,

Is there at least one place in your life where you are giving and receiving love? If it happens in one place, it can happen everywhere. If you are truly capable of loving one person, you're capable of loving more than one, and eventually even your enemy, and finally all. Richard Rohr

Where there is love, there is God. If we make love the predominate message of our lives, we will not only be speaking about love, we'll be speaking about God. We'll be proclaiming God and God's message -- truly the prophets that we were anointed to be at our baptism. Bp. Thomas Gumbleton

At the time these texts were written, there was no obvious assurance that the believers in this tentative, obscure movement of Jesus followers would survive, let alone prevail. The readings today provide these early believers with this assurance. They make the perhaps audacious claim, given all due appearances at the time, that this is the community God has chosen, the community that has

time and history on its side. This, we can see from where we stand, is true. But how bold it was to say that at the time. In his final farewell, as recorded by John, Jesus looks ahead to the time he will no longer be physically present among his followers, and he gives some advice and makes a prayer. His advice is simple, yet profound: love one another. We continue to hear these words through this season, as well as through the supper discourse of Jesus in John's Gospel. It is a program for the new community, which will be known by it: See how these Christians love one another. Fr. Robert Beck. Witness: 5th Sunday of Easter 6, 2007

God's love for us is everlasting. That means that God's love for us existed before we were born and will exist after we have died. It is an eternal love in which we are embraced. Living a spiritual life calls us to claim that eternal love for ourselves so that we can live our temporal loves - for parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, friends, spouses, and all people who become part of our lives - as reflections or refractions of God's eternal love. No fathers or mothers can love their children perfectly. No husbands or wives can love each other with unlimited love. There is no human love that is not broken somewhere. When our broken love is the only love we can have, we are easily thrown into despair, but when we can live our broken love as a partial reflection of God's perfect, unconditional love, we can forgive one another our limitations and enjoy together the love we have to offer. Henri Nouwen

...If love is absent, says Gregory, "the imprint of the image is altered." Almost imperceptibly Gregory here changes the tone of the discussion to depict human nature in light of what it has become in Christ. Christ, as the image of God, figures not only in the restoration of human nature but also in any full account of its creation. Completion and beginning are seen as complementary, in his words, "The end is given in the beginning." Creation is promise as well as gift, and it is only in seeing Christ that we know what was made in the first creation. Wilken, Robert L. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*. London, Yale Univ. Press. 2003.

The farewell discourses begin by making love between Christians the commandment (cf. 1 Jn. 2:7; 3:11,23). Through the formulation directs that love toward members of the community, the expectation that outsiders will recognize it indicated that it has a tie to the evangelization expected of the community. The command is clearly grounded in the example of Jesus (cp. 15:12; and even in the example of God, 3:16). Since it is the only commandment in the Johannine tradition of ethical preaching as we have it recorded, we no longer find it as summary or fulfillment of the law. Rather the love command bears all the weight of Christian ethical obligation [Perkins: 152-55; Brown II:612-14]. Perkins, Pheme. *Love Commands in the New Testament*. NY. Paulist Press, 1982. Pg. 107.

A particularly illuminating example of the subtle shift that was taking place can be seen in Cyril's exegesis of John 13:31-32: "Now is the son of man glorified." This text was perplexing because it identified Christ's suffering with glory. Jesus had said, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified" (John 12:23). How can this be? According to the Scriptures, the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, is encompassed by glory. If the son of God is already crowned with glory, how can he be said to be glorified now? Texts of this sort received little attention in earlier commentators, and Athanasius seems to have avoided them. Cyril, however, does not balk at the identification of suffering with glory, and in his commentary on John plunges confidently ahead to meet the challenge presented by the words of the gospel. When Saint John uses the term glory in this context, says Cyril, it can only mean that Christ is glorified as man, which, he adds, is something different from being eternally glorified as the son of God. Further, the evangelist indicates that glory is greater than the glory associated with his miracles. Armed with this insight Cyril turns to the heart of the matter, the significance of the passage is that Christ's glory is found in suffering: "The perfect fulfillment of his glory and the loss of his fame clearly lie in this, in his suffering for the life of the world and making a new way through his Resurrection for resurrection of all."

Schooled by the fourth evangelist, Cyril realized that suffering was not an unfortunate interlude in the life of Jesus. It is an integral part of God's plan and the necessary fulfillment of the Incarnation. Commenting on "the hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified," he says that after Christ had preached the gospel and done everything to bring men to faith he "desired to pass to the very crowning point of hope, namely the destruction of death. This could not be brought about in any other way than life undergoing death for the sake of all men so that in him we may have life. For this reason Christ says that he is glorified in death. . . . His cross was the beginning of his being glorified upon earth."

As Hilary saw clearly, it was the Resurrection of Christ that led Jesus' followers to think about God in a new way. When Cyril writes his commentary on the Gospel of John, he sees another dimension to the Resurrection. The Resurrection was evidence that Christ was a unique kind of man. Christ, he writes, presented himself to God the Father as the first fruits of humanity. . . . He opened up for us a way that the human race had not known before." Before Christ came into the world "human race was incapable of destroying death," but Christ was superior to the tribulations of the world and "more powerful" than death. Hence he became the first man who was able to conquer death and corruption. By showing himself stronger than death, Christ extends to us the power of his Resurrection "because the one that overcame death was one of us." Then Cyril adds the sentence, "If he conquered as God, to us it is nothing; but if he conquered as man we conquered in Him. For he is to us the second Adam come from heaven according to the Scriptures." This is an extraordinary statement and to my knowledge unprecedented. Cyril asserts that Christ triumphed over death because of the kind of human being he was. His human nature makes Christ unique. Pgs. 119-121.

Wilken, Robert L. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*. London, Yale Univ. Press. 2003.

For John, the manifestation of Christ's full glory is not the working of wonders and miracles, but the undertaking of a journey to a place where the disciples cannot follow him until later – a place of glory. The two faces of Jesus in art reflect the gradual transformation in Jesus' manifestations, first as miracle worker than as Lord and Savior. They distinguish between his earthly ministry and his heavenly mission of divine self-sacrifice and cosmic redemption.

Hefner sees the basis of agape in God, “that is, in the way things really are”. Given this foundation of love in ultimate reality, altruistic love attains an intrinsic, ontic character. Love is “written into the fundamental nature of human reality” (Hefner, Philip. *The Human Factor: Evolution, Culture, and Religion.* 1993,208) It thus becomes apparent that altruistic love does not ultimately spring from the family or other human relations, as theories of kin selection or reciprocal altruism presuppose.

Mesinger, Hubert. *Sociobiology; The Confersation Continues.* Christian Love and Biological Altruism. *Zygon*, Page 769

Jesus commanded us to love; so we know love is not just a feeling, since we cannot command feelings. Love is mostly a decision. Jesus did not say: When you get healed, love; When you grow up, love; When you feel loving, love; When you get it together and have dealt with all your mother/father/husband/children wounds, then you must love. No, the commandment for all of us is to LOVE now, and thus fill the tragic gaps of every moment. Richard Rohr

To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name. To find love I must enter into the sanctuary where it is hidden, which is the mystery of God. Thomas Merton. *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Dimensions Press, 1961): 60

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle C* 2013. Pgs. 92-95.

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B* 2010. Pgs. 72-72.

Butterfly
Tired of Being a caterpillar,
feeling safe and secure,
I chose to suffer
the dark night of the Chrysalis,
grounded,
Transformed
in order to taste the nectar of the heavenly garden
carried aloft by the Breath of the Holy Spirit
on a Butterfly Journey
so short,
but oh so Wondrous and Sweet.
[John Chuchman](mailto:poetman@torchlake.com) poetman@torchlake.com