

Our Sunday Readings

ACTS 14:21-27
 PSALM 145:8-13
 REVELATION 21:1-5a
 JOHN 13:31-33a,34-35

New and Glorified

REVELATION 21:1-5a

Reading closely

1. What in this passage most captures your imagination?
2. How is God portrayed?
3. What all belongs to the *old order*?
4. How do you imagine everything becoming new?
5. How will God's presence in the future be different from the way God is with us now?

Living the word

6. If you were struggling in your faith and heard this passage, how might you respond?
7. What do you want God to make new in your life?

THE SECOND READING

Inspiring hope

The vision incorporates passages from the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah. This passage gives hope to those Christians who either were being persecuted or were in danger of letting the dominant Roman culture erode their faith.

All is made new

In Revelation 20:11 the earth and sky flee the risen Christ when he comes as judge because creation itself is so corrupted by sin that it

knows it won't be judged favorably. In the vision of 21:1 God brings forth a new creation, where at last God's reign is all-encompassing. *The old order has passed away*: no evil will be in any part of God's new world.

In the ancient world the **sea** represented chaos and death. The sea was a reminder that God's reign hadn't fully come about. John writes that *the sea was no more*, making it clear that God will permanently expel evil from every part of creation.

A new Jerusalem

Jerusalem was the holiest place on earth for Jews because it was home to their one temple. The temple symbolized God's presence among his people. It was the only place where Jews could make their sacrifices. This temple was destroyed in 70 AD.

Jerusalem and its inhabitants were frequently personified as a bride wedded to God. In this passage Jerusalem is again presented as a bride, but her husband is the Lamb, the risen Christ (21:9). God gives his people to the Lamb, who awaits her not in heaven but on earth. Heaven and earth, the previously separate realms of God and humankind, are now united forever.

JOHN 13:31-33a,34-35

Reading closely

1. What did Judas do next?
2. Why do you think Judas left at that point in his relationship with Jesus?
3. What might the disciples have thought when Jesus spoke of his *glorification*?
4. How might the disciples have responded when Jesus indicated he was leaving?
5. Do you think the disciples found the command to *love one another* easy or hard?
6. How exactly were the disciples to show their love?

Living the word

7. When have you been impressed by the love one person showed another?
8. Could anyone say they were impressed by the love you showed someone?
9. Do you think Christian love has an impact on people's belief in God?
10. Share some times you have experienced God's love through another person.

THE GOSPEL READING

Love one another

This passage comes soon after the story in which Jesus washes his disciples' feet. Jesus is trying to prepare his disciples for his imminent death. He's also instructing them on how to live once he's gone.

Now is the Son of Man glorified

At its simplest level the title *Son of Man* means a *human being*. However, the term is also used in Daniel 7:13-14 to refer to the one to whom God gives power and authority over all the nations.

Jesus speaks of his crucifixion and resurrection as a *glorification* of God.

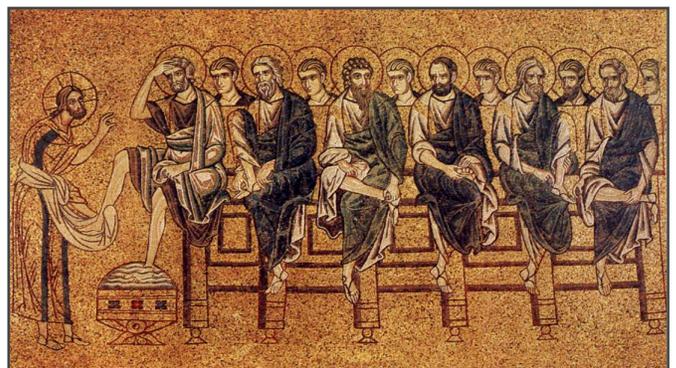
- The crucifixion is not a terrible humiliation but a revelation of God's perfect love
- The resurrection reveals God's defeat of sin and the power of evil

Jesus himself is also glorified because God restores him to his heavenly origins. God sent Jesus to reveal his love. Once Jesus fulfilled God's plan, God drew him back fully into the divine life. Jesus thus shares in the glory of God.

Love one another

When Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he was both preparing them for his crucifixion and symbolically demonstrating how they should treat each other. The action of washing someone's feet was normally performed by a household slave. Jesus wants his followers to treat one another with humble, selfless love.

The followers of Christ must show self-giving love for one another so that others will be drawn to Jesus, and through Jesus, to God. The more people respond to self-giving love, the more God's love is revealed and the more God is glorified.



PRAYER

Alternative Prayer for the Fifth Sunday of Easter

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 you have revealed to the nations
 your saving power
 and filled all ages with the words of a new song.
 Hear the echo of this hymn.
 Give us voice to sing your praise
 throughout this season of joy.
 We ask this through Christ our Lord.
 Amen.