

**May 2, 2010 Fifth Sunday of Easter**  
**The Rev. Canon Bob Riegel**

**John 13:31-35**

On an Easter Day when I was about four or five my mother made me bathe and scrub, she used a white pencil in my nails to cover the dirt, she used some sort of sticky stuff to glue my hair in place, and then she presented me a white suit wear; short pants, tie and jacket. She looked at me and said, "You look glorious." I looked at me in the mirror, was a bit shocked, and I was not sure that I ever wanted to look glorious again. But I have come to believe that it is essential that we see glory in the life of Jesus Christ. And we are called to let that glory shine in our own lives. Christians are meant to be glorious.

The last supper was ending. Judas had left to betray Jesus to the authorities. Jesus knew that in a few hours he would be captured and tried like a criminal and hung on a cross to die. It was a moment when we might expect Jesus to express anger and fear, disappointment and failure. We might expect him to judge and condemn all of those who turned against him or who would let him down in some way. Instead, Jesus makes an amazing proclamation of victory. "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him, and God will glorify him at once." What was going on was some of humanity doing their very worst, trying to get rid of Jesus on the cross of death. But what was happening at the same time and in the same event, God was revealing God's gracious love and perfect humanity at one.

What is it to be glorious? I have a list you could add to.

- Jesus was glorious because he brought light into a dark world.
- glorious because of obedience
- glorious because of his amazing love of all people

- glorious because he revealed that humans are not cut off from God
- glorious because of his radiance bringing healing and hope
- glorious because he manifested the very being of God to others
- glorious because he did not condemn
- glorious because even on the cross he was the life and light of the world.

What instructions did Jesus leave so that our lives might be glorious? He said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." I fear that many of us have forgotten the glory of loving and we spend too much time in arguing over orthodoxy, the meaning of creeds and the interpretation of Bible verses. I think we get lost in the darkness of talking about who might and who might not be deserving of heaven and who might be deserving of Church membership and God's love. The glorious life of Christ reveals that God's love is not conditional; it cannot be earned or deserved. It is an amazing, spectacular, freely given love to all of God's creation. And it is in simple acts of love that that we best show the glory, the truth and the way of God.

I want to share a story. It came as an Email with no source. I hope it is a true story, but even if it never happened it suggests the importance and the glory of love.

His name is Tim. He has wild hair, wears a T-shirt with holes in it, jeans, and no shoes. This was literally his wardrobe for his entire four years of college. He is brilliant. Kind of profound and very, very bright. He became a Christian while attending college. Across the street from the campus is a well-dressed, very conservative church. They want to develop a ministry to the students but are not sure how to go about it.

One day Tim decides to go there. He walks in with no shoes, jeans, his T-shirt, and wild hair. The service has already started and so Tim starts down the aisle looking for a seat. The church is completely packed and he can't find a seat. By now, people are really looking a bit uncomfortable, but no one says anything. Tim gets closer and closer and closer to the pulpit, and when he realizes there are no seats, he just squats down right on the carpet. By now the people are really uptight, and the tension in the air is thick.

About this time, the minister realizes that from way at the back of the church, a usher is slowly making his way toward Tim. Now the usher is in his eighties, has silver-gray hair, and a three-piece suit. A godly man, very elegant, very dignified, very courtly. He walks with a cane and, as he starts walking toward this boy, everyone is saying to themselves that you can't blame him for what he's going to do.

How can you expect a man of his age and of his background to understand some college kid on the floor? It takes a long time for the man to reach the boy. The church is utterly silent except for the clicking of the man's cane. All eyes are focused on him. You can't even hear anyone breathing. The minister can't even preach the sermon until the usher does what he has to do.

And now they see this elderly man drop his cane on the floor. With great difficulty, he lowers himself and sits down next to Tim and worships with him so he won't be alone. Everyone chokes up with emotion...

When the minister gains control, he says, 'What I'm about to preach, you will never remember. What you have just seen, you will never forget.' 'Be careful how you live. You may be the only Bible some people will ever read!'

It may be scary to be glorious, but, yes, we can be glorious by letting the unconditional love of God shine through our lives to others,