

Fifth Sunday of Easter

COSMIC RADIANCE

John 13:31-35

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Analysis by Cathy Lessmann

31When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. 32If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 33Little 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.' 34I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. 35By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

DIAGNOSIS: Lackluster Living

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Lackluster Living*

One of our narcissistic society's primary values is self-fulfillment which causes us to conduct our relationships as if other people existed for our benefit. "You're here to make ME happy," we assume. Then we wonder why our relationships and our communities fall apart, why people wilt from lack of care, attention, and affirmation. We wonder why no one knows we are Christian.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Dark Hearts*

John, our gospel writer, would not be surprised. He was well

aware that humans are born with a natural proclivity for such self indulgence; he called it “darkness.” Luther later described it as the heart curved in on itself (*incurvatus se*): plain old sin. It reminds one of black holes which originally started as off as glowing reflectors (think in terms of God’s image, God’s love) but then implode on themselves due to an overwhelming inner-gravitational pull. So great is that force that every “light” (living person, relationship, community) around gets sucked in and disappears in the darkness.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Dead*

The laws of physics are unchangeable, the prognosis is bleak. Black holes have imploded into themselves and already are dead stars. Likewise, black-hole sinners implode into themselves, loose all their “light”-i.e., life and love, all the necessary ingredients for living, for “glowing.” Demise is inevitable.

PROGNOSIS: Transforming Radiance

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Glow-ry*

But now imagine a Force powerful enough to OVERCOME the inward gravitational pull of a black hole! And then imagine that same Force being powerful enough to transform those black holes back into light emitters/reflectors once again. You’d probably respond, “Well, that would have come from something ‘out of this world.’” Exactly! Jesus is saying that right here, right now, in the events that are happening to HIM as Judas goes about betraying him, that’s EXACTY what is transpiring! Almighty God is about to “glow” on sinners with such brilliance that they will be transformed from dead-and-dying into new and glow-rious creatures. Such an intense, transforming beam will radiate from God’s laser “glow” of mercy-love-forgiveness. First, this glow beams on Jesus who in turns reflects it to dying black-hole-sinners, right there in the narrative, as he trudges to Calvary and is nailed to a cross, There, according to John, the

brilliance reaches its zenith.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Hearts Radiated – All Aglow*

Such an intense mercy-love-forgiveness laser zap does overcome and transform the selfish inward gravitational pull. Hearts die out on themselves and “repent,” joyfully accepting [in faith] a new, glow-rious infusion (of life and light), and they are completely transformed into new bodies (creatures).

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Radiating Jesus*

The “glow” that now emanates from such reconstituted hearts radiates toward other black-holes and warms them up. The glow feels like...no, it IS, love, and there is no mistaking its originating source.. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (v. 35). Like a laser ricocheting around the cosmos, the mercy-love-forgiveness laser-beam emanating from the Father, reflected off Jesus, penetrating and then bouncing off of us reaches other black holes in desperate need of vivification.