It’s another beautiful day in Syracuse, NY. The sun is shining down on us in between the thunderstorms. When I was a boy, growing up in Cleveland, I despised the cloudy, rainy days. But I don’t get too sad about cloudy, rainy days these last few years.

One reason is that I’m not a boy anymore. When you are a boy you want to go outside and play with your friends. When you are an adult your life is not so dependent on the weather.

The second reason has something to do with the fact that I lived in Wyoming for five years before I moved to Syracuse. Where I lived, in Casper, Wyoming, it is very dry and sunny. It is what they call, ‘high desert’. There are very few places where trees and other plants will grow. If you plant a tree or any other plant in your yard you have to water it, usually at least once each week, even in the winter. After living in Casper, Wyoming I do not mind clouds and rain.

The third reason I no longer get so sad about cloudy, rainy days has to do with what I observed once when flying across the country. We took off from LaGuardia airport on a cloudy, rainy day. The airplane climbed higher and higher through the rain and the clouds until we were flying above the clouds. For the next several hours sunlight poured through the window of the airplane, regardless of the weather down below.

It might seem strange, but for me it really helps to know that the sun is always shining on the earth, even if the clouds are blocking the sun for a while. Sometimes, on a cloudy day, I just remember what it was like to fly above the clouds to a place where the sun is always shining. It helps me remember that clouds are a local, temporary phenomenon. Above the clouds, the sun is always shining.

The sun is always shining, and God is always present with us. God is always present somehow, beside us, behind us, ahead of us, and even within us. The idea that God is always present with us is one of the main ideas behind the Gospel of John.

Many people have noticed that the Gospel of John is different from the other Gospels because the thesis of the Gospel of John is that Jesus is not only the Son of God; Jesus is God. For instance, a few weeks ago we heard a passage where Thomas responds to Jesus with these words: “My Lord and my God.” This is different from what we find in the other Gospels. The Gospel of John places Jesus right next to God, the creator of the universe.

Sometimes we fail to notice that the Gospel of John also places Jesus’ followers right next to Jesus and right next to God. Here are just a few examples. In chapter 17 Jesus prays for his disciples, that they may all be one. I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one. As you, Father God, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us ... Jesus prays for his disciples to be completely united with each other and to be completely united with God: “May they also be in us.”

We are invited to live in God, to spend each day walking alongside the one we call the Lord of love. In chapter 15 Jesus describes this relationship like a vine and branches. Abide in me as I abide in you. I am the vine and you are the branches. We are invited to be connected to God as branches are connected to a vine. Just in case we don’t understand the metaphor Jesus uses simpler language. He says, I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from God. Living with God means living with knowledge of God beside us and God’s work around us.
In chapter 14 Jesus promises his disciples *I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. I am in God, and you are in me, and I am in you.* Jesus’ followers are right next to Jesus and right next to God. We are never far from the one who created us.

All of which brings us back to chapter 13 from the Gospel of John. Jesus said, "*Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.*"

What does this mean? Some form of the word ‘glorify’ is used five times in just two sentences. What does it mean to glorify? One definition of glorify is ‘to give honor or praise’. This makes this entire passage about the honor of God and of Jesus as the son of Man, like this: "*Now the Son of Man has been honored, and God has been honored in him. If God has been honored in him, God will also honor him in Godself and will honor him at once.*"

This interpretation of the idea of glorification has always seemed a little baffling to me. Honor was certainly an important value in the time of Jesus. In the time of Jesus, honor was the most important thing. Jesus lived in an honor-based, power-based culture. In Jesus’ time a person’s value and status was based on their personal honor and honor was a competitive, zero-sum game. If you have more honor, I will have less. Many people still use an honor-based or power-based value system today.

Yet in most of the rest of the New Testament Jesus and the apostles completely reject the honor and power culture of their time. As St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, the message of the cross can appear to be foolishness. Following a messiah who was crucified runs completely counter to the direction of an honor-based and power-based culture.

Instead of honor and power, it might be more helpful to consider the idea of ‘glorification’ as having to do with making something visible. Glorify has to do with making something visible to people in a new way. Try this reading: “*Now the Son of Man has been made visible, and God has been made visible in him. If God has been revealed in Jesus, God will also reveal the Son of Man in Godself and will make the truth of his presence visible at once.*”

When it comes to our journey with God, we are like people who live in Syracuse, New York. We keep walking along our way but sometimes it is cloudy for days and days and even for weeks at a time. We do not notice that the sun is always shining, the clouds just get in the way.

In the same way, we are never far from the one who creates us out of love and for the purposes of love. Sometimes we just don’t see God travelling beside us or behind us.

Jesus makes God visible to us. When Jesus makes God visible, we see that God is concerned with love. We see that Jesus is the revelation of God’s love. We see that we are close to God.

Just as Jesus’ work was to make God visible to the world, our work is also to make God visible to the world. Jesus tells us how to make the Lord of love visible to the world. Jesus says, *I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

We are called to glorify God, that is, we are invited to make the Lord of love visible in the world. We do this by loving one another.

It’s not that it’s really complicated. It’s just that we have to choose between living for the sake of honor and power or living for the sake of love. We cannot do both.