

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 6, 2018

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John 15:9-17 ⁹ "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full. ¹² "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. ¹⁴ "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. ¹⁵ "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. ¹⁷ "These things I command you, that you love one another.

Back to the Love of Christ

Jesus begins this section by reminding us to live in His love

Jesus is about to go to the cross. He wants to know that from his suffering will come a people who delight to love one another. Listen to the phrases He uses in this section:

- if you keep my commandments
- that my joy may remain in you
- you are my friends if you do what I command you
- go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain
- that you love one another

All the language here is over and over again this that Christ wants his believers to be a beautiful church, not a cathedral of wood or stone with high vaults and stain glass windows, but a people who rejoice in God and serve one another in love.

Yet as we are about to see this is an impossible thing, for Christ himself knows how Satan will break the church apart into squabbling factions. He knows how Satan will fill the church with every kind of hatred

and vice and sinfulness so that sometimes the outward church is a more wretched and detestable place than the rest of the world.

Therefore He reminds us at the beginning that the one important thing we must remember and keep in our minds at all time: that we live in His love.

What does this mean?

First what is the love of Christ? Christ himself will answer that a few verses later, “No greater love has any man than this that he lay down his life for his friends.” This is Christ’s love, not that He was *willing* to lay down His life, but that He *did* lay down his life. For love is not the thought or the feeling but the action.

All of scripture constantly bears witness to this, “God so loved the world that he sent.” The love of the father was the action of sending. “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us,” the Love of the Son was that action of laying down his life for us.

Therefore when Christ says “live in my love” this is the same as saying “Live in the cross” for the love of Christ is the cross.

Second what does it mean to “live in?” Only this that we think about it constantly, that we return to it always, that it is the center and focus of life, the place we gain strength, the place we come for comfort and assurance.

Therefore this verse means nothing less than that we should always cling to the cross of Christ, that we should always return to it and the love that Christ showed us at that cross. Indeed we should not need to return to it for we should always be there, but if we do find ourselves straying we should immediately go back to it and cling to it. Confessing with our mouths and our hearts that we are terrible sinners, but knowing here at the cross that we are forgiven in Christ. And that this is how Christ loved us that He stretched out His arms and died for us.

“A picture is worth a thousand words” well actually “the RIGHT picture is worth a thousand words.” This one on your bulletins is worth a million. This is what Christ means in the first verse of our text, that the life of a Christian is a life clinging in humility and joy to His cross, to His love. Always return to His love

VERSES 10 -12

You see right away again we have to immediately return and cling to the cross. Because who can bear to hear these words of Jesus.

“If you keep my commandments . . .” “So that my joy may be full . . .” Who thinks that Jesus is full of joy at the sight of your life? Who here thinks that they can compare to Job whom the Lord boasted of

before Satan? Do you think Jesus would say to you, “yes I am glad that I died for you, your life was worth all the suffering and death, it fills me with joy to know that I died for this life?”

We do not keep His commandments, and Jesus knows how utterly we will fail, so that He tries again, for at first He said keep my commandments, but now He says “one commandment.” As if to say, okay you failed miserably to do what you were supposed, let’s try just this one thing.

But even in this one thing we fail miserably for which is a better description not only of our lives but even of our church that we “love one another,” or and here I have to quote Luther for He says it far better than I can:

It is inevitable that one member occasionally jostles the other, just as a foot or a toe of our body bumps the others, or as a person injures himself. Such bumps and trials do not fail to come, especially because we are sojourning here in the realm of the devil, who tempts us uninterruptedly, and also because the flesh is still weak and full of flaws. [Luther Works Volume 24 page 244-245]

So which is the better description of us?

Therefore we have to immediately go back to the cross and love of Christ, as in the picture, and plead for mercy and forgiveness. There then Jesus’ joy is fulfilled in us, as David said, “Blessed is the man whose transgression is covered.” So at the cross of Christ our sins are covered, then Christ is filled with joy in us. There also we are given the strength to continue on so that one day we might become the people of God who do live in love with one another.

VERSES 14-16

Now Jesus himself goes back to His love for us. After laying such a heavy burden on our hearts that He knows we cannot bear. He continues

“You are my friends.” Do you doubt that I love you and you are mine? Jesus assures us that we are forgiven and that His love remains upon us with these words, “you are my friends.” You are not servants whom I ordered about but don’t care about, who only serve me and are not worthy even of remembering your names. No you are my friends. If you doubt it, look and see I speak to you about my innermost thoughts and feelings. I hide nothing from you. This is something we do only with our closest friends, yet Jesus has done this with us.

When we choose friends or when we are chosen as friends, we might always be worried, we are best of friends now but what if I do or say something and they do not like me anymore, and so we want to keep secrets. This is especially true when you start dating. Most people try very hard to hide who they really are, because they are afraid that boy or girl will not like them if they know.

But again Jesus dispels even the possibility of such thoughts for He says, “you did not choose me, I chose you.” And Jesus does not choose the way men chose. When we choose we do not know what we are getting entirely, so that later we might regret it, or later we might throw away the friendship. But Jesus knows us intimately, completely, fully, better than we know ourselves, yet He has chosen you anyway and made you His friend.

Therefore being fully confident In His Love, knowing that we are His friends, being assured of forgiveness at His cross, Jesus says share this same love with one another. In order to do this we must stay firmly rooted to His cross and the love and forgiveness it gives us, but having that love and forgiveness how can we not share it with one another? By which I mean both telling others of His love and also showing the same kind of love in our lives.

AMEN

THE PEACE OF CHRIST THAT SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING SHALL KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS