

May 6, 2018

## **Love One Another**

### PRAYER

May the words of my mouth be meditations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

### SERMON

If you've been with us the last couple of Sundays, you've heard gospels that have Jesus speaking of himself. I am the good shepherd was two weeks ago. The relationship between Jesus being the one who leads, the one who is in relationship with the sheep. The inference, of course, being that the followers of Jesus are the sheep and how important it was to recognize the voice of the shepherd. The one who calls so that we can follow. So that we can be safe. So that we can be what we are called to be. What we are created to be.

Last Sunday Jesus said I am the vine and you are the branches. Again, this idea and understanding of relationship that Jesus has come to be the one that gives life, that redeems life, that sustains life. And that our life in Jesus as I abide in you and you abide in me. Then you bear fruit. Then you live the life that you were meant to live. A life in relationship to God. And a life in relationship to one another. All based and founded in that relationship with God.

This Sunday's gospel then moves to another way of speaking to the disciples and to those who will follow. It now comes in the form of command as I have loved you, you are called to love one another. It's given in the form of a command. This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. It's all about that relationship. It's all about what they have experienced in Jesus during his earthly

ministry. He's still making his way to the cross. He's trying to bring his disciples along so that they know and understand what the relationship is and what it is meant to accomplish. I am the good shepherd, you are the good sheep to follow. You are to follow in that way to be fed. You follow in that way to be protected.

I am the vine and you are the branches. You will continue to abide. You will continue to know and understand what the Father is doing through the actions of the Son. The promise that is coming that you will not be left alone. You will not be left comfortless. I will send the paraclete. I will send the Holy Spirit, the comforter. So that you will continue to abide in the truth. So that you will abide in all that Jesus has taught and all that Jesus has given during this earthly ministry. But also, the great gift that Jesus is about to give in eternal life for all people.

As these things are going on, as you follow in this way. As you abide, as you follow then you will be commanded to love. That's the most difficult command that God has ever given us. As God has loved me Jesus says, and I abide in God's love, so I have loved you. And that is the love that is willing to give all. Because the love that he is talking about is that love in relationship. The love that recognizing the worth in one another. The love that recognizes that we are bound together in a relationship not out of affection, not out of similarities, but out of the fact that we are God's created children. That what Jesus came and gave to the world was for every person.

The love that Jesus is talking about is the love that recognizes and gives integrity to every human being. It's a love that recognizes that each person is worth relationship. That each person is called to hear the good news. With a hope that they will become part of the flock that follows. That they will become part of the branches of the vine. So that the fruit that is born by those who know and love God. Those who

know and love one another, God's children, then the love of God and the fruits and the Spirit of God will help us to create in this world the kingdom of God that Jesus has been speaking about throughout his whole teaching ministry, his whole earthly ministry. We are called to hear, to abide, to follow, and to love, to care. To care enough to give to ourselves to one another. To suffer before one another so that justice and mercy can prevail.

We're called to give of ourselves with the idea and understanding that that is what love does. And that is what we have seen in the living of Jesus life, that it is out of love that he comes into the world. That it is out of love and obedience that he suffers for us. That it is out of love and obedience to God that he gives his life for his friends. And that is the greatest love of all.

Too many times when we speak about love and certainly I hear it. I'm assuming that you do too. That people share how difficult it is to love. There's some people that just appear to be unlovable. Sometimes they're mean-spirited. Sometimes they just don't agree with me. Sometimes they just are hard to get along with. And I'm expected to love them.

How many of you are on Facebook? Okay. How many of you follow the Episcopal memes? A few of you. There's one that shows up periodically. It's Jesus, it appears to be the sermon on the mount. He's sitting up and he's teaching the disciples. He's sitting up above them and he says, "You need to love one another." And someone from the crowd says, "Well what if they're Muslim or what if they're mean or what if they don't agree." And Jesus says, "Well let me start over and see where I lost you on this."

It doesn't matter who they are. It doesn't matter where they are in their lives. It is because we are the flock and we are the followers that

we are called to love them. They don't have to love us back. Is that new? They don't love us back sometimes. We have family that don't love us back sometimes. We have people, friends, former friends crosswise, that they don't love us back sometimes. But that doesn't mean that we don't care for them. That doesn't mean that we don't want for them the justice and mercy that all God's children should have. And we are to be the bearers of that. We are to be the voice that speaks out for that. That is what the church is. That is what the church does.

We create a place called the kingdom of God here on Earth so that people could be welcome. People who are different. People who are hard to get along with. People who have hearts as big as Alaska and want to give and care for. Those people are a little easier to love. But we're called to love them all. Because Jesus came, and he taught for all. He came, and he suffered for all. He came, and he died for all. And as his followers we are called to look at one another, each one, everyone and see not strangers and not competitors but brothers and sisters. To see other children of God.

To give them what we can to help them know and understand God's love for them. To create a space where a relationship can be had. Jesus tells his disciples I am the good shepherd, follow me. Listen for my voice. Come and be safe. Come to the place where I need and want you to be. I am the vine and you are the branches. Abide in me and the fruit you bear will be wonderful and will be pleasing to God. As a father has loved me so I have loved you. Abide in my love. My commandment to you is to love one another as I have loved you. His love was one of teaching. His love was one of mercy. His love one of giving himself for us. And that is the love that we are called to offer to the world.

Rector – Greg Hein

Transcriptionist – Renee' Evans

Attention all transcription receivers:

Just a little note to inform you that there will not be a transcription for next week. It is Mother's Day and we will be having a youth led service. Transcriptions will pick up on May 20.

Also, I will be out of town on May 27 so I will do that transcription when I come back in town.

Thanks for your understanding and patience.

Renee' Evans