

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt
Sixth Sunday of Easter - Year B
62nd Week of Pandemic - Outdoor Worship
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Acts 10:44-48
Psalm 98
I John 5:1-6
John 15:9-17
05/09/2021

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

[Jesus said:] 9“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. 12“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15I 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 my Father. 16You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

The Gospel of our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Show Love

Good morning! When Megan and I visited St. Paul's way back in March or April of 2016 we got a picture in front of one of the many LOVE signs throughout the state. It's always been one of my favorite things about Virginia. "Virginia is for LOVERS." What a great slogan! The Virginia Synod has added a twist to the saying and at Youth Gatherings and other events you will see "Virginia is for Lutherans." But, I would argue that they mean the same thing. Because if we cannot claim to be a Christian without love in our hearts.

Love is a tricky thing. It's been ruined by the vast majority of romantic movies that portray love as some magical and ethereal thing that sweeps you off your feet, and carries you blissfully through everything. But that isn't love. Love isn't an emotion, it's a decision. You need to **choose** love.

We pick up today's Gospel reading directly where we left off last week. We had verses 1-8 last Sunday, and today we finish with verses 9-17. It's a beautiful collection of verses. As we near the end of the Gospel of John Jesus gives the disciples a very lengthy sermon of advice on how they are to live when he is gone. We had an interesting conversation about this text on Monday, and so I'll share with you some of the highlights of what we noticed.

The first is that there seem to be some qualifications for how to love. We can't just throw out the word love willy-nilly. If we are to love we need to abide in God. Because without doing that, without showing love through obedience to the commandments, we aren't really loving. This can seem a

little strange to us, because like I said, the movie industry has ruined how we understand love. But as someone said Monday, love isn't an emotion, it's action. Love is a verb.

That's why my favorite verse is Colossians 3:14 *"Above all, clothe yourself with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."* I think that idea of actively putting on love is such a perfect image. You can walk out the door and forget your coat, likewise you can forget to put on love. We need to actively make sure we are doing it. I get it though, the diehard Lutherans among you are probably pointing out that this smells a lot like works righteousness. But bear with me! We're not doing this because we're trying to earn our way in, but out of thanks for what's already been done.

Obedying the commandments can seem a little weird. But I think Martin Luther can help us out with this one. Obedying them can seem like it's pretty simple. God tells us not to kill, so we don't kill. Check. Jesus raises the bar and says that even anger in our hearts breaks the commandment. But Luther switches the whole thing around. It isn't enough to not do something, but we need to **work** to protect our neighbor. Since you're all good Lutherans, I'm sure you'll finish this quote from the Small Catechism along with me. *"The Fifth Commandment: You shall not murder. What does this mean? We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs."*¹ So when we read the beginning of our lesson, we can see that Jesus is calling us to live out our love for others.

Take another look at verse 11. *"¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."* It's like

¹ Luther, Martin. *Small Catechism*. The Fifth Commandment.

Jesus is telling us that if we go throughout life without giving love, we'll be empty. It won't be worth it. I think we've all run across someone who was so angry that they seemed like a burnt out husk. It was as if all that rage burned them up. But what we see here in verse 11 is a call to live our lives with true joy. That joy can only come about when we are actively working to love one another!

We finish today with words from the greatest show ever made: Dr. Who. The 12th Doctor's words before leaving are a wonderful summary of God's call for our lives. *"Never be cruel, never be cowardly... Remember, hate is always foolish, and love is always wise. Always try to be nice, but never fail to be kind... Laugh hard, run fast, and be kind."*² Amen.

² Doctor Who. Series 11, Christmas Special.