

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Sixth Sunday of Easter - Year B

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Outdoor Worship Service

Acts 10:44-48

Psalm 98

I John 5:1-6

John 15:9-17

05/05/2024

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.

I Chose You...

Good morning! All throughout middle and high school I had an arch nemesis. Dale and I did not get along. As young kids we had a few scuffles, and by the time high school came along we had come to an uneasy agreement to just never be around each other. It seemed to work well enough, we had a few close calls, but we mostly made it work. That all changed our senior year of high school at a party where we both found ourselves carrying a mutual friend to a car because they were, well, sick. Another friend commented that they never thought they would see the day that the two of us would be working together.

Our dislike for each other was so ingrained that it was all we saw, until a moment where we both looked into the other person's face and saw another human being. It had become more about hating each other simply because that's all we knew. That rare moment at a party wasn't a magic pill, we still certainly didn't enjoy each other's company, but it did mark a turning point where we could at least stomach being in the same room as the other. It reminds me of something my childhood pastor used to say, "we don't have to like each other, but we do have to love one another."

That's the challenge before us today in our Gospel lesson. In case you haven't noticed, the average congregation is changing. In the future, it will fall on the

shoulders of the community to increasingly work together, in love. Take a look around this gathering. Do you love one another?

The challenge that Jesus gives us today is uniquely crafted for the existing community. But in today's lesson Jesus is speaking directly to his disciples. Like last week, we find ourselves in a section of what scholars call the Last Discourse, the final lesson that Jesus gives specifically to his disciples before his arrest. This is a message for those that are closest to him. It's as if he's saying "If you can't get along, if you can't love one another like I have loved you, then this thing won't work."

And believe me, it was certainly a challenge for those disciples. In fact, the church has been trying to figure out how to get along from almost day one. The apostle Paul wrote frequently about the disagreements that the early church found itself struggling with. Things like the Nicene and Apostles Creed only exist because the church met and argued and nailed down what was the core of their belief. The Reformation marked another time of immense struggle.

We haven't always done a great job. But that's the reality of sin after the fall. What matters is whether we keep trying to do a better job. St. Paul's has always been for me a place where the people seem committed to trying again and again. It's easy to choose hate. It's immeasurably harder to love. But I think we're up to the challenge. Amen.