

## 050524 English Sermon "Abide in Jesus' Love" John 15:9-17

Today, we read John 15 which is given in the lectionary. What is lectionary? Well, lectionary, in Christianity, a book containing portions of the Bible appointed to be read on particular days of the year. For example, this is the sixth Sunday after Easter. The same Bible verses that are appropriate for this season of faith are read in most churches. For that reason, when you go out of town and visit another church to worship, if that church worships according to the lectionary, we read the same Bible verses even though you are in a different place.

Anyway, Chapters 14 through 16 of John's Gospel are known as Jesus' "Farewell Discourse." Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure from them. He shows his disciples that his death and resurrection will bring them blessing. Of course, Jesus' disciples at that time could not understand what he said.

John 15:9 begins like this: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love." Then Jesus continues, "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."

Then, what does Jesus' "commandments" refer to here? Of course, you could think that it refers to the whole Bible or maybe the Ten Commandments. But when Jesus speaks of "my commandments", it refers to what Jesus started to mention in the end of chapter 13. You see, in the previous chapters, Jesus proclaimed "his new commandment." Specifically, that commandment is "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." Jesus commanded people who loved him to love sisters and brothers close by. A word that is often used in our world is "love." Love is a subject that frequently appears in songs, movies, dramas, and novels. Actually, there is no one who does not love. Whether the object of that love is a person, either oneself or another, pet, money, power, knowledge, or popularity. But each person loves based on his or her standard. In other words, people love those who meet their standards.

But if you look at today's scripture, there is a condition attached to "love" – "as I have loved you ..." We are comfortable around people who fit our

profile. It is when another person's educational background, morality, life circumstances, age, gender, skin color match ours that it is fun to meet the other person and that meeting is enjoyable. In that respect, Jesus' teaching is a challenge to all of us! That is because if you reflect on his commandment, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another," you realize it was Jesus Christ who consistently lowered himself for us, devoting himself to and loving us until he died on the cross.

Well, if you take a look at Jewish community in the first century you will find there was not a whole lot of love being shared. The people were divided into Pharisees and Sadducees, students of Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai, Herodians and Zealots, and on and on. God's people were greatly divided when Jesus gave this new commandment. They did not love the aliens in their land. They did not love their neighbors as themselves, most Jews despised their neighbors, the Samaritans. They did not love one another.

2,000 years ago, the Jewish leaders including Pharisees and scribes included only people of the same religion and ethnicity in the category of neighbors [plosion, which means near to, close by]. They excluded Gentiles and Samaritans live close by from the neighbors they should love. They only loved "my people." However, Jesus challenged them. And he gave them a new commandment: Love one another just as I have loved you.

So Jesus calls his disciples back to the basics, because if they cannot love one another, then they certainly cannot love the community and they cannot love God. Jesus gives us his commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.

When Christians talk about love we mean both the love God shows for us, and the love we show for one another. And the two loves are so closely related that they are very nearly one. The first letter of John puts it this way: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God... For God is love."

In verse 11, Jesus also says amazing words. "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete." He said that keeping his commandments is to dwell in the Lord and that's not the end. While you're walking with God, he will complete your joy. That's the

promise of God.

### **Charles Spurgeon on Joy**

“There is a marvelous medicinal power in joy. Most medicines are distasteful; but this, which is the best of all medicines, is sweet to the taste, and comforting to the heart. This blessed joy is very contagious. One dolorous spirit brings a kind of plague into the house; one person who is wretched seems to stop all the birds from singing wherever he goes . . . [But] the grace of joy is contagious. Holy joy will oil the wheels of your life’s machinery. Holy joy will strengthen you for your daily labor. Holy joy will beautify you and give you an influence over the lives of others.”

“There is more joy in Jesus in 24 hours than there is in the world in 365 days. I have tried them both.”—R. A. Torrey

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, in Romans 5:8 the apostle Paul said, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Let us love one another as the Lord has loved us. When we love each other, our community also will know it. We will see new things we can do for our community as one. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.