

May 6, 2018
Easter 6
ILC, Wichita, KS
John 15: 9-17; How to Love

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text which forms the basis for my message today is taken from the Gospel. I would like to reread the very last verse of the Gospel for today. Jesus says:

"This is my command: Love each other."

Here ends the text.

My good friends in Christ.

The Gospel for today is all about love.

Have you noticed that it is easy to love when things are going well... and sometimes really challenging to love... when people throw a curve ball your way.

Thinking about that... reminded me about a story I received over the internet... so some of you may have heard this before.

This story is about a man named... Ed.

He forgot his wedding anniversary and his wife was really angry.

She told him, "Tomorrow morning... I expect to find a gift....

- in the driveway
- that goes from 0 to 100 in less than six seconds;
-AND IT HAD BETTER BE THERE!"

The next morning Ed got up early and left for work.

When his wife woke up she looked out the window...

And sure enough there was a

- ...small
- ...wrapped gift
-in the middle of their drive way.

Confused... she put on her robe and ran out to the driveway... and brought the gift back into the house.

She opened it and found...

... a brand new bathroom scale which did... as she requested...

“Zero to 100 in less than six seconds.”

Her husband Ed.... has been missing since Friday... please pray for him.

Love... it is expressed in a variety of ways.

Love is the word that summarizes the Gospel for today.

I. Jesus command in the Gospel is quite simple. Jesus says in verse 12:

“¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

A. But these words that Jesus spoke sound so out of place when we take into context when our Lord said them.

Jesus spoke these words on the last night of His life.

This night was filled with... hate... betrayal... and rejection.

We might wonder... how could Christ speak these beautiful words teaching us to love one another.... when it seemed as if the whole world was not loving Him?

B. Christ was able to speak these words...

... Because..... Christ was battling sin.

Some people might even wonder why Christ needed to give us this teaching.

They might ask: "Aren't we able to love all on our own?"

The answer to that is --

Christ had to call us to love because... by our nature.... we are not able to fully comprehend.... what it means to love.

The nature of each human being is one of... sin and we fall short of the glory of God.

We see this by taking a look at the world around us. There we see:

- wars in the middle east...

- religious fanatics in the middle east who call on the death of everyone who doesn't follow their way of thinking...
- persecutions of thousands of Christians in the Sudan....
- all this comes about as a result of sin.

Since Christ came to battle sin... our Lord is able to teach us to

-- love others.

(2) Notice how the words of Jesus begin in the Gospel for today...

Jesus begins the Gospel for today with these words:

A. ^o“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. . ^oIf you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”

1. Jesus loves us the same way that Father loves Christ.

-- How did Father love Christ?

Father... sent Christ to our world to save us from our sins.

-- How does Christ love us?

Christ loves us in just the same way. Christ sends us out into the world to share His Gospel with others and so offer salvation to others...

2. Jesus continues in verse 12 (7th line) as He says: **"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. "You are my friends if you do what I command.**

A. When did Christ show this love to us? Christ showed His love for us when He died on the Cross to redeem us from our sins.

B. And now we are to love others. Jesus says that the greatest expression of love is by giving our life for others in a spirit of love.

Writer Max Lucado, in his book *A Love Worth Giving*, has a wonderful discussion of 1 Corinthians 13... Paul's magnificent chapter on love.

Lucado especially focuses on verse 4-8: **"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."**

Several years ago, says Max Lucado, someone challenged him to replace the word... love... in this passage with his own name. He did... he says... and promptly became... a liar.

- Max is patient
- Max is kind
- Max does not envy

“That’s enough... Stop right there...” cried Max Lucado.

“Those words are false. Max is not patient. Max is not kind. Ask my wife... ask my kids... Max can be an out-and-out clod! That’s my problem.

- And for years that was my problem with this paragraph.
- It set a standard I could not meet.
- No one can meet it.
- No one... except Christ.

Then Lucado adds this thought, *“Does this passage not describe the measureless love of God?”*

- Let’s insert Christ’s name in place of the word love... and see if it rings true.
- Jesus is patient
- Jesus is kind

- Jesus does not envy
- Jesus does not boast.
- Jesus never fails.”

Lucado writes, *“Rather than let this Scripture remind us of what we cannot produce.... Let it remind us.... of a love we cannot resist... God’s love.”*

This is the type of love and friendship that Christ is talking about in the Gospel for today.

The type of love that Christ has for each one of us.

We are to live as baptized children of God.

Through our Holy Baptisms... we are marked with the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Through the gift of Holy Baptism... we have access to Christ... so that now... we can practice this gift of love with one another.

We might not do it perfectly... as Max Lucado says... but we can practice and practice it... until we get better and better as God’s children.

So... my friends... this week... when you find yourself

- following a car that is driving 15 mph below the speed limit;
- find yourself in the grocery store and the check out line is to the back of the store;
- find yourself turning on the TV... only to have your cable system go completely blank...

This week... when you face those momentary frustrations... put on the love of Christ... and watch the stress level go down. Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

- Offering
- Offertory
- Prayer of the church