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April 29, 2018

Easter 5

ILC, Wichita, KS

John 15: 1-8; "What are you tied to?"

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 this morning is taken from the Gospel for today.

If you would like to follow along... on the back cover of the bulletin... the bottom right column... we start at the beginning of the Gospel from St. John, the 15th chapter, the 1st verse:

Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit the Father (he) takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit the Father (he) prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ."

Here ends the text.

My good friends in Christ.

My sermon this Sunday is not a usual sermon... but the Call of Jesus in the Gospel is not a usual Call....

In the Gospel lesson for today Jesus talks about

.....A vine....

..... branches.....

.....Being connected....

Jesus tells us that we are all connected to something or someone. So, let me begin by asking you this question:

What are you connected or tied too?

Are you connected or tied to ...

..... your family or relationships....

.....are you connected or tied to your health.....

..... are you connected or tied to your job.....

Everyone is tied or connected to something. What are you tied too?

Using the Words of the Gospel as a foundation... I would like to center my message to you around 2 areas where I believe the Lord would have us be tied or connected too.

The Gospel would have us connected to :

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1. God
2. Each other

I. We are blessed , who are sitting in church this morning, because we are tied to God.

The Catechism would tell us that there are two aspects of life that have tied us to God.

A. The first reason why we are tied to God is because of
.... the world,
.....our sinful nature
.....and Satan.

Because of these... we are all tied to God... but not because of positive reasons.

1. Let's start with the **world**. The world is always trying to pull us away from God. Demands on our times with our jobs and with the daily activities of life are so time consuming that the events of our world... try to pull us away from God.

2. Next... We are also pulled away from God by our **sinful nature**. Our sinful nature is that part of our human life that causes us together make bad decisions, bad choices and choose sin instead of choosing God.

3. And finally there is the pull of **Satan**. Although in our daily lives we might not hear much about Satan... he exists. Satan is at work in each of our lives trying to tempt us to sin against God. Satan tempts us to choose sin instead of choosing to be tied to God.

This part of our lives... that is... the world, our sinful nature, and Satan try to sever our being tied to God. If this would be where the Gospel would end... we would be a sorry lot. But thanks be to God because we have been ... reconnected or tied... to God.

B. One way that we have been reconnected or tied to God is through Holy Baptism.

Whether our parents brought us to be baptized as little children.... or we came to faith later on in life and were baptized.... through our baptisms we have been made one with God.

Because we are baptized we have the ability to come to God and say:

“Father I am sorry that I have sinned. For the sake of Jesus please forgive me from all my sins.”

And being tied to God we receive forgiveness. Therefore, we can start each day new.

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Baptism and also Holy Communion, and the Word of God... not only show us how we are connected or tied to God... but they also restore that connection to God... when we sin or when we fall away from God.

II. There is a second part of our lives where I believe we are tied or where we are connected. And that is I believe that we are tied to each other.

Specifically, I believe that we are tied to each other through Immanuel.

And through Immanuel I believe that the Lord is calling on us to reach out to others who are not a part of Immanuel. I believe that God is offering Immanuel this opportunity in her history to reach out to other and be tied to them also.

A. At various times in the life of a parish the Lord will offer that parish the opportunity to be a blessing. This is Immanuel's time.

Some might ask:

How can Immanuel be a blessing in a world that seems confused or directionless? I believe there are two ways Immanuel can reach out.

1. One way is through your **worship style**. Immanuel practices a highly traditional and historic worship style. Your ability to use the historic Liturgy and use it well... is rare in the world. There are those who might think that every Lutheran parish worships life is as highly liturgical as Immanuel's... But I can tell you it is not.

The liturgy is one means whereby God's people connect with God. As there are many different types of worship styles in our world. I believe that there are many in the Greater Wichita community who would choose this worship style if they knew Immanuel existed. Through Evangelism and Outreach we need to get the knowledge of Immanuel out into our greater community.

2. **The 2nd strength** of Immanuel that I believe we can use to reach out...

Is your **friendliness**. You the members of Immanuel are excellent at greeting visitors and making new comers feel welcome. It is not this way in the majority of parishes. You greet every visitor. You make everyone who enters the doors of his sanctuary feel welcome.

You are tied to Immanuel . And this giftcalled Immanuel..... is needed by many in our world.

So... where do we go from here.

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I have centered my May parish newsletter article around this very thought. Pastor Winter has started working with our Administrative Council... to help us...

Renew... repurpose... and rebuild Immanuel... for the present and for the future.

Please check out the May parish newsletter...

Know that these thoughts are going to be more highly talked about and publicized throughout our parish, through sermons and newsletter articles.

Because as Jesus says in the Gospel... **He is the Vine... and we are the branches.** I believe that the time has come for Immanuel... to reach out to our greater Wichita community... and invite those in... who are searching for this type of worship style to connect with our Lord.

My sermon assignment for you this week: Pray for Immanuel... and pray for her leaders. I believe that God has an exciting future ahead of us.

Amen.

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