

May 5, 2024

Sixth Sunday of Easter

John 15: 9-17

This morning we come across the word ABIDE once more. It is mentioned about two or three times in this morning's Gospel. The word is tied greatly to love and keeping commandments. As the Gospel unfolds Jesus explains these concepts and how they relate to abiding.

The boundaries of abiding here are very interesting and complex.

Abiding is not only a state of mind and spirit. Jesus says it is the path to keeping His commandments. He reveals that commandment later on.

Jesus encourages the disciples to keep His commandments because Jesus has kept God's commandments. The result of doing this abiding can be seen and observed in all that Jesus did. Jesus is doing His best to

inspire and encourage the disciples to do the same. If Jesus has kept God's commandments we should keep Jesus's commandment.

Jesus finally reveals that His commandment is that you love one another, as I have loved you! In the past Jesus spoke about commandments that He demanded from His followers. That they have and practice mercy and compassion. Now there is only one commandment. I imagine that mercy and compassion is rolled up in this new commandment. Jesus extends the depth of understanding of this new commandment. The commandment to love includes dying for one's friends. Jesus is referencing and pointing to His future crucifixion and death that are to come. There is a huge change here. Jesus now looks upon His disciples as friends. They are no longer strangers, mere disciples, or servants, but friends.

Jesus goes on to explain the shift from disciple to friend. They have shared in the riches of all He has had with them, in terms of His relationship with God. Jesus held nothing from them but shared

everything with them. Jesus hid nothing from them, but shared His intimate relationship with God with them. Jesus's offering of friendship is very overwhelming. Their friendship with Jesus has made the disciples friends of God too. Jesus sharing His relationship with God has brought the disciples into the inner sanctum of God. Their understanding of God has deepened greatly.

The outcome of all this abiding and loving one another, and being a friend of God is Joy. This is not just any joy, but the joy of Jesus Christ. Joy is happiness that does not come to an end. It can last for a very long time. Some have said it is an exuberance of faith that nothing can destroy. This is a deep rooted sense of happiness that is not only emotional, but a vibrant pleasure in the things of God.

ABIDE is one little word that goes beyond its meaning to include so many blessings and grace. Jesus does a great job in explaining what abiding in His love is all about. It is a multi-layered concept that Jesus

unpacks beautifully. Each layer rests on the other but it all leads us to God.

Just a bit of an observation that I noticed. The Epistle of John this week and last really helped to explain the concept of love from a Christian perspective. They are more of an essay on love than what appears in the Gospel of John. In his Epistle, God redeems us in love, God is love, God abides in us, love overcomes fear, love of God means love of others. This Epistle is more of a hands on instruction book. The Gospel of John seems to be more historical. What Jesus did and said where. The Epistle is more expansive. Just a thought. God Bless you all and have a prayerful week and abide in His love, Pastor D.