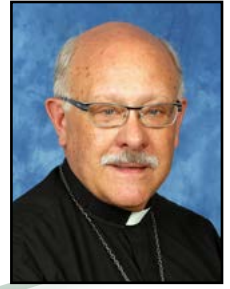




Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 15, 2017

RSVP

John 15:1-17

{We mark a time of silence...and a prayer..."O Love that never lets us go, make us let go of that which keeps us from a clear hearing of your Word; send again your Holy Spirit, in Jesus' name, Let us be...."}

The words of Jesus one more time...from a literal translation...

- "I, I am the real root of the matter, and my Father is the Orchardist.
- I, I am the Root of the Matter, you disciples are the branches.
- The individual making a home with me (as I am with him or her)---there is the person bearing much fruit.
- Here is my very special command: that you have love for one another---out of the well of my heart for you.
- I am not going to call you servants anymore...
- I have decided to call you friends...I chose you...
- This (in sum) is what I am commanding you: Have a heart for one another!"

1. GOD IS FOR ME/FOR US

Most of you know that I was raised a Baptist. That is until I began to attend a Lutheran Church. And that was the beginning, some of my family thought, of my "spiritual undoing."

As loving and safe as it was, I always had the hunch that to be "saved" I had to do something. I watched it often as a child as the altar call came at the end of worship and "dunking" baptisms occurred for those who had "accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior." As some time two things gave me pause: the dunking and the dating. I always feared that if I did make that confession I would have to literally GO UNDER. And I didn't much like the thought of being held under water "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Just didn't think that God had that in mind for me.

It was a wise and loving pastor that taught eight 8th graders that it is not so much about what we do that saves us, but what God had done in Christ once for all. That was my "baptism" in the belief that our salvation is by **grace alone**, through **faith alone**, through **Christ alone**.

And in the years that have followed, I have remembered almost every day my Baptism and that I know that God has accepted me, forgiven me once for all, and walks with me each day with my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

2. JESUS IS OUR FRIEND

The Gospel shared is a commentary on John 13:34: "I give you a new command, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." Again, a literal translation might read "I give you a FRESH command." I like that because this love of which Jesus speaks is often easier to "say" than to DO. It gets pretty complicated when the outcome seems to be love your neighbor (Some days!), love your enemies (Really?), and love yourself (NO problem most days☺). And sometime the freshness becomes petty when we count the cost of those we live with in the world each and every day.

You see in some ways God changes the scene when the "command" finds fulfillment in the power of the love that is ours through the One who shows that love in a death on the Cross and in living that love through us. Jesus again says "Just as much as the Father loved me---there! THAT IS HOW MUCH I HAVE LOVED. MAKE YOUR HOME IN THIS SPECIAL LOVE OF MINE (AND RELAX)."

This love meets us in the days of our lives...at the places where we are somehow convinced that we are not good enough, smart enough, fast enough, loving enough, and just plain feeling unworthy! And those are the times when I have to recall that Jesus is the One who gave His life for me, for you, for us and that there is NO great love than that anywhere in all of God's creation! In Jesus Christ, we have a TRUE FRIEND---"all our sin and griefs to bear," that we might "carry everything to God in prayer, "in his arms he'll take and shield you," "take it to the Lord in prayer." For he is our Lord, our Savior, our Friend.

Here is the sum of it, Jesus again, "It is I who chose you and appointed you to move out and to bear fruit, fruit that lasts. (Let me say again: I appointed you)."

3. THE POWER OF AGAPE, LOVE BINDS US

"AGAPE" IS A SINGULAR WORD FOR LOVE. It is a love which seeks to enfold, encourage, enrich with NO expectation of return. And it is that love that binds us together in the Body of Christ, the Church, this place to be full of it...that love...from the great well of the love of God for us and for all the world.

Then, as Jesus says, "that my very special joy can be right there in the midst of your community and so that your own joy can be filled to overflowing." And that is meant to be the nature of the those who walk in the name of Jesus!

How's your waking and walking in the joy of that love! This week I have seen the abiding love of Christ in our community:

✠ ✠ ✠ A friend sought a moment of forgiveness for a misunderstanding between us that has been like a wall. And that we have been forgiven and loved, helped us to forgive and find joy. "It is when you bear much fruit and so be come disciple to me," taught Jesus.

✠ ✠ ✠ Love brought Joy serving the homeless men's shelter: "I enjoyed the look on the men's faces when we piled roasted chicken on their plates instead of casserole." And "The men are just like us. Their journey has just taken some side road and they are now trying to back on the main road."

✠ ✠ ✠ From abiding in Jesus, a one of our leaders wrote, "It is an honor to be a representative... (on Council)...a privilege to assist in the development of the church's vision...an opportunity to meet people, listen to them and learn...A BLESSING TO GROW IN MY SPIRITUAL LIFE." Another noted "I am programmed to answer in three points but not particular order: 1) Insightful, 2) At times frustrating, 3) A calling.

✠ ✠ ✠ A young woman received a bag of food and directions to Hopelink up on Main Street: "You now only feed the body you feed the soul." Bearing "fruit" beyond measure!

✠ ✠ ✠ Noting we live in divisive time, a candidate for office said, "It is time for more kindness. Our spirits are willing but flesh is weak."

In the midst of our world, our communities a Table is set for us. As Jesus ate with His own in an Upper Room, washed their feet, was clear on the power of the Father's love and support for Him... and called us to be with Him on the road of life.

The Table is set. A gift of love from the One whose love will never let us go! RSVP, respond please, by our weekly 'altar call,' Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper and then GO---

"Rejoice in the Lord in ALL WAYS, again REJOICE.

Let your gentleness be known to everyone.

The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in

Everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God.

And the peace of God, which is way beyond human understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

ALL BY WAY OF SAYING, GOD HEARS OUR "RESPOND IF YOU PLEASE." AND WE ARE MET AT THE TABLE. WITH WORDS THAT ARE VERY CLEAR, THE WORDS OF JESUS, "My body, my blood, my life 'FOR YOU, FOR YOU.'"

The fruit of discipleship becomes real as we have "a heart for one another" and for the world. Amen.