

May 9<sup>th</sup> Worship 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Easter

### **Introduction to the Day**

This Sunday's image of the life the risen Christ shares with us is the image of friendship. We are called to serve others as Jesus came to serve; but for John's gospel, the image of servanthood is too hierarchical, too distant, to capture the essence of life with Christ. Friendship captures the love, the joy, the deep mutuality of the relationship into which Christ invites us. The Greeks believed that true friends are willing to die for each other.

This is the mutual love of Christian community commanded by Christ and enabled by the Spirit.

### **Thanksgiving For Baptism**

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ, let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We thank you, risen Christ,

for these waters where you make us new,  
leading us from death to life, from tears to joy.

We bless you, risen Christ,  
that your Spirit comes to us  
in the grace-filled waters of rebirth,  
like rains to our thirsting earth,  
like streams that revive our souls,  
like cups of cool water shared with strangers.

Breathe your peace on your church  
when we hide in fear.

Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness.  
Send us companions on our journey  
as we share your life.

Make us one, risen Christ.

Cleanse our hearts.

Shower us with life.

To you be given all praise,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God,  
now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **Prayer of the Day**

O God, you have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all we can desire; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **Lesson – Acts 10:44-48**

<sup>44</sup>While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup>The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, <sup>46</sup>for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup>“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” <sup>48</sup>So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

### **Gospel – John 15:1-8**

[Jesus said:] <sup>9</sup>“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup>“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

## Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Our Gospel text for today picks up where we left off last week. Last week brought us the repetition of the word *abide* and what it means that Jesus commands us to abide in God's love, and God will abide in us. We imagined what it would be to build a home, a dwelling place, a space for God to remain. 11 times we heard that word *abide*.

Our gospel text for today again has that theme of repetition. 9 times we hear Jesus tell his disciples to love.

In the middle of this 8 verse monologue peppered with LOVE, Jesus introduces another concept.

"I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."

What is joy? And, how is joy complete?

Thinking about, and trying to describe joy, we often find ourselves talking about things that make us happy.

But, joy and happiness are not the same thing.

When we think of happy it is easy to come up with an opposite. Simply add "un" in front of it and you now have the opposite. You can't do that with joy. The opposite of joy is a completely different word, or even words. Sorrow – Angst – Sadness, and the list goes on. But, unjoy, is not an option.

Joy and happy are not the same thing. In fact, you could argue that a string of happiness perhaps leads to joy, but the correlation stops there.

A colleague of mine asked the question: What is the difference between joy and happiness?

It was difficult. I found myself offering something that I'm not sure was an answer, but it helped me understand it, I think. There are things that my children do that make me happy. There are things about my children that bring me joy.

Does that define it? Not really. Does it clear it up? Perhaps.

Joy is a thing we struggle to define but are fully aware exists. There was certainly a palpable sense of joy in worship last week as many were able to come back to in-person worship for the first time in 13 months. The feeling in that place of worship and in the building was a feeling of joy.

Ultimately we land on joy being a constant. Joy is always there. We might not always feel it. In fact there are moments where joy seems about as distant a thing as it can get. But, it is there.

As there have been discussions throughout the week about this concept, with myself, with colleagues, with the Tuesday Bible Study group, the verse from Psalm 30 has continually come to mind. "My joy comes in the morning."

Much like Easter Sunday at the end of the three days, we know full well that the "night" after which the joy will come, is often much more than a go to bed and wake up the next day. Often times the morning in which we find joy comes after many long nights. But the joy is there. It is present. Because it comes from the Lord.

I don't believe it is an accident that Jesus puts this little nugget about joy in the middle of 9 mentions of LOVE. Love love love love love your joy comes from the Lord love love love. Not an accident.

At first reading this seems to be a text for those to whom joy comes easily. And, for whom love comes easily. And maybe it is, but not in the way we are thinking.

BECAUSE ALSO IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS LOADED GOSPEL TEXT...

Is the reminder that “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” As 21<sup>st</sup> Century people of faith, we know what Jesus is talking about when he says this. We know that he will one day lay down his life for his friends and for us, literally. Is he really calling us to do the same?

Or, is he calling us to lay aside those things that might keep us from sharing the love of Christ that each of us enjoys? If you’ve ever been joyful, you know the struggle of someone less joyful coming into a room. And vice versa, if you aren’t feeling that joy, there is nothing worse than a bubbly personality waltzing into the room.

Jesus calls us to set aside those things and accompany those who may not be where we are at. The church-y term is Theology of the Cross. It is an understanding of God that says God would take on human form, live among us, to suffer and die for us, so that when we go through pain and suffering we don’t go it alone. And, part of that is to accompany those who aren’t where we are at in the journey.

There is a command given in this 8 verse monologue. And while our attention goes to the concept and wondering of complete joy, the commandment given is to love. Jesus doesn’t give the commandment to be joyful. He gives the command to love. In that, we will find joy. And that joy will be complete. The completion of our joy is found in the sacraments.

In baptism when we are washed in the waters of God’s grace and mercy, and the Lord’s Supper when we are reminded that this grace and mercy, this gift and meal of forgiveness, is something for ALL people.

And what are we to do with it? Share it.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

## **Apostle’s Creed**

### **Prayers**

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

Loving God, you call us to be your fruit-bearing church. Strengthen the bonds among all Christian churches. Call us to honor and respect all expressions of you, our creator – redeemer – sustainer. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

Creating God, the earth praises you. The seas roar and the hills sing for joy. Fill the earth with your love so that by their song, all creatures of land and sea and sky, burrowing and soaring, may call us to join with them in praise. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

Faithful Savior, you conquer the world not with weapons but with undying love. Plant your word in the hearts of the nations’ leaders and give them your Spirit, so that the peoples of the world may live in peace. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

Caring Healer, you forget no one and accompany the lonely. Be present with those who are sick or suffering (especially Jim Holte, Jim and Sandy Nelson, Joe Christensen, Steve and Marilee Julson, Bill Kuehn, Shirley Stark, Kathy Smith, Bob Kries). Provide for those needing homes or medical care and point us towards life-changing responses to these needs in our own communities and be with the dying. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

Gracious God, as a mother comforts her child, you comfort us. Bless mothers and mothering people in our lives. Comfort those who miss their mothers, mothers who grieve, those who grieve because they cannot be mothers, and those who have never known a loving mother. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

Gentle Redeemer, all who die in you abide in your presence forever. We remember with thanksgiving those who shared your love throughout their lives. Keep us united with them in your lasting love. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **Offering**

### **Offertory Prayer**

God of love,  
you call us beloved children and welcome us to your table.  
Receive our lives and the gifts we offer.  
Abide with us and send us in service to a suffering world;  
for the sake of your beloved Child, Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

### **Words of Institution – We invite you to find bread and wine or juice and partake in this Holy Meal.**

(Holding the bread) In the night in which we was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and broke it, gave thanks and gave it for all to eat saying, “This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

(Holding the cup) Again after supper he took the cup, and after giving thanks he gave it for all to drink saying, “this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. So often as you do this, remember me.”

Once you’ve taken the elements say, “Wellspring of joy, through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts. Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses, that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Lord’s Prayer**

#### **Blessing**

May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom  
to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus.  
The God of life, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.  
**Amen.**

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

**Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!**

**Please sign up to attend in-person worship!**

**May 16, Sunday worship will be switching to 9:30 am.** Please call DeAnne in the office to get signed up!

### **Re-Connect Opportunities**

We hope you will join us for any, or all, of these Re-Connect Opportunities throughout the week!

Stop in for coffee and conversation at 9 am on Mondays

TUESDAYS be sure to stop by for Bible Study starting at 11, followed by Lunch and Laughter at noon.

Wednesdays will continue to be our Faith Formation Days

Thursdays we will have the sanctuary open for prayer for 8 am to 3 pm.