

Sixth Sunday of Easter – May 5, 2024

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.

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Greeting – The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Welcome

Thanksgiving for Baptism

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the wellspring of grace,
our Easter and our joy.

Amen.

Look, here is water!

Here is our water of life! Alleluia!

Immersed in the promises of baptism,
let us give thanks for what God has done for us.
**We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning
your voice thundered over the deep
and water became the essence of life.**

**Adam and Eve beheld Eden's verdant rivers.
The ark carried your creation through the flood
into a new day.**

**Miriam led the dancing as your people passed
through the sea
into freedom's land.**

**In a desert pool the Ethiopian official
entered your boundless baptismal life.**

Look, here is water!

Here is our water of life! Alleluia!

At the river your beloved Son was baptized by John
and anointed with the Holy Spirit.
By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection
you opened the floodgates of your reconciling love,
freeing us to live as Easter people.

We rejoice with glad hearts,
giving all honor and praise to you,
through the risen Christ, our source of living water,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen.

Look, here is water!

Here is our water of life! Alleluia!

Gathering Hymn

“All Are Welcome”

#641 vs. 1,3,5

Prayer of the Day

O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Reading – Acts 10:44-48

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

Children’s Message

Holy Gospel – John 15:9-17

[Jesus said:] ⁹“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I 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. ¹⁶You 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. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

P: The Gospel of our Lord

C: Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon

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

There is a distinct call in this Gospel text for us to be in relationship.

In fact, we hear Jesus longing for us to be in relationship with him!

The Easter Season Gospel texts actually bring us back to before the crucifixion and resurrection to moments in his ministry when Jesus tells His disciples what it is that he most wants them to remember. And so, in this continuation of our Gospel text from one week ago, we get the carrying on of the theme and buzzword, “abide.”

To abide is to make a dwelling in. To make a home in. To remain in.

In John chapter 15 Jesus tells his disciples:

“Make a home in me and I will make a dwelling in you! Those who remain in me and I in them bear much fruit. If you make a home in me and my words dwell in you, ask for whatever you wish and it will be done for you. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you, make a home in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and dwell in his love.”

As we hear Jesus speak of this relationship that he longs for we realize, we hear, that it is not some one-sided exclusively beneficial relationship, but rather it is a mutually beneficial relationship.

Jesus does not only call us to abide in him, to make a home in him, but rather tells us that in doing so he will also remain within us. We’ve seen, perhaps experienced, relationships before that are strongly one-sided. So often we see folks taken advantage of and relationships that are not a benefit to all parties involved, and we know they aren’t fun. But Jesus calls us into a relationship that goes both ways benefitting all parties involved. Make a home in me and I will make a home in you.

Again, this is a reminder that Jesus is giving his disciples about life after him before he has died. Remember, we have time-traveled to a pre-crucifixion conversation. Jesus is telling his disciples what it is that they NEED to know for life beyond his physical presence among them. Make a home in Jesus, but more importantly, make a home in Jesus' love!

As we think of love, in the Greek language, there are three types of love. There is *aeros*, *philos*, and *agape*. One of my good friends, Christian rapper Dave Scherer, goes by the name *Agape*. In one of his very first songs he defined these types of love as:

“*Philos*, that’s the love I’ve got for my brother.
Aeros, that’s the love I’ve got for my partner.
Agape, that’s the love I’ve got for everybody in the world.”

Jesus, in calling us to live into the love with which he loves us, is calling us into that unconditional *agape* love for everybody in the world. Jesus is calling us to think about how all that we do affects that love that we have for everybody in the world. All 8 billion. Now, we will most likely never meet 7,999,999,000 of those folks, but that does not mean that we are not in relationship with them.

Yes, our relationships for those that we experience that *aeros* love are much different than the relationships for those with whom we have the *philos* love, and even more different than the relationships with those whom we will never meet, but each of these relationships is rooted in the unconditional *agape* love with which Jesus calls us to love.

Jesus tells his disciples there and then and he tells us here and now that this love is the kind of love that will have us lay down our lives for one another. He is headed for the cross. He knows that. It is what he is trying to get them to realize. He will literally lay down his life and die on the cross for them and for you and for me. Does that mean that we are to do as he died and die on a cross for our friends? Maybe not, but it does mean that we may need to lay aside some of those thoughts and feelings, those preconceived notions, those things that might be upsetting us about the other, and anything else that might keep us from fully loving all whom we are called to love, and that all that we are called to love is the other 8 billion people with whom we share this beautiful creation that we inhabit.

This Gospel text is one of those few moments in scripture where Jesus leaves nothing for the imagination. I don't know that we ever get a clear statement from Jesus regarding what it is that he wants us to hear and take from what it is that he says to us.

In this second half of John 15, Jesus changes our understanding of what it means to bear fruit. Jesus takes the hurt and other feelings we may have around that language, whatever it is that our life experience has formed us to think about bearing fruit, and he changes.

To bear fruit, as followers of Jesus, is to make disciples. To bear fruit is to live in such a way that people look at us and our actions and all that we do, and they think, “that person knows Jesus. I want to know Jesus. That person loves Jesus and is loved by Jesus. I want to know and be loved by Jesus to.”

People of God, in changing our understanding of this sometimes initially troubling phrase of bearing fruit, Jesus tells us plain and simply that to bear fruit is to hear his commands SO THAT we may love one another.

For Jesus, it is that simple. Something that for us is sometimes so so difficult. For Jesus, is so so simple.

Love Jesus. Love others.. The end.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Hymn of the Day

“Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love”

#708

Apostle’s Creed

Prayers

Rejoicing that Jesus is risen and love has triumphed over fear, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need of good news.

A brief silence.

Your Holy Spirit falls upon all who hear the word. Fill your church with the gifts of your Spirit and give understanding hearts to those who strengthen our commitments with our ecumenical and interreligious partners. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

You speak and the face of the earth is renewed. Revive your creation, that habitats and every kind of living thing might flourish. Protect endangered species and help us to care for all your creatures. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Your world is divided and the nations rage. Grant wisdom and vision to world leaders, that they may seek justice, peace, and the good of all. Strengthen international partnerships and cooperation. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Your children are in need. Comfort all those who suffer, especially those afflicted by anxiety, depression, and mental illness. Help us to be conduits of your love in our care for one another. (*We pray especially for Matt, David, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Cherri, Peggy, John, Judy, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Dan and Sharon, Roger and MaryLee,*). God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Your work is done in this place with our hands. Bless the ministries of this congregation (*ministries may be named*), that we may embody your love for the world. Inspire those who plan and lead worship, council members, committee members, and volunteers. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Your blessed saints now rest in you. Give us thankful hearts for those who have gone before us (*especially*). At the last, bring us all together around your heavenly banquet table. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Into your hands, most merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abiding love; through Jesus Christ, our resurrected and living Lord.

Amen.

Peace

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Risen One,

you call us to believe and bear fruit.

May the gifts that we offer here

be signs of your abiding love.

Form us to be your witnesses in the world,

through Jesus Christ, our true vine.

Amen.

Sacrament of Holy Communion

#471 #483

Lord's Prayer

The risen Christ is made known to us
in the breaking of the bread.
Come and eat at God's table.

Post Communion Prayer

Shepherding God,
you have prepared a table before us
and nourished us with your love.
Send us forth from this banquet
to proclaim your goodness
and share the abundant mercy of Jesus,
our redeemer and friend.

Amen.

Sending

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Go in peace. Rejoice and be glad.

Okay! We will! Thanks be to God.

And all of Good Shepherd said,

"AMEN"

Sending Hymn

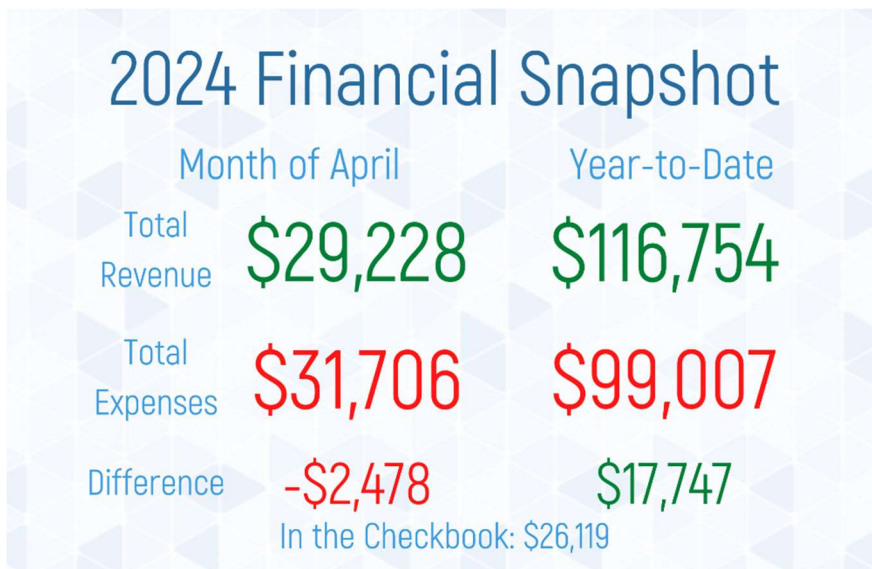
"Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee"

#836 vs. 1,3

Blessing

The God of resurrection power,
the Christ of unending joy,
and the Spirit of Easter hope
✠ bless you now and always.

Amen.





In worship Sunday we introduced Good Shepherd Connect Cards. These are simple conversation cards for you to have on hand at the dinner table, out at a restaurant, at a gathering with friends, during fellowship time following worship, or even for personal reflection. Some questions are deep and meaningful. Others are simply good for a laugh or an icebreaker. If you would like a set of cards, call the church office and we'll get them to you.

Through the month of May we will be sharing a question a day on Facebook. You can share your responses on each individual post or use them to guide conversation at home. Use them however you wish!



Did you know? May is Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd's birthday month! Come celebrate with us and some of our community partners with worship and a potluck on May 19!

Good Shepherd Sunday Celebration

If you missed the service on April 21, you can still watch it on YouTube. And below is the link for some photos that were taken during the service.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1EedKknO6F5Q--M9n9IJXHdHKO7WLPmJo?usp=sharing>

If you would like to order a print of the picture, forms are available at the church.