

Watch

John 15:9-17

May 5, 2024

Adapted from Candy Wrappers and the Love of Christ – A Sermon on John 15:9-17; Easter 6B by Michael K Marsh

Many of us want to be connected, to be remembered, to have and to know our place in life. Maybe we all want that. Regardless of how old we are or the circumstances of our lives we want to know: Who am I? What are the connections that will sustain my life? Where is my place in this world? /

Those are the questions Jesus is addressing as he speaks to his disciples in today's gospel. It is the evening of the last supper. Jesus is speaking final words, one last sermon, to his disciples. He is preparing them for life without his physical presence, foreshadowing what resurrected life, Easter life, is to be like. He offers some direct answers to those questions: You are my friends. Abiding love, laying down life kind of love, is the connection that will sustain you. I am your place in this world. /

Most of us spend a lifetime searching for those answers and trying to make them our own. It helps when they become more than intellectual answers. When they become lived become lived (1)

answers. We learn to trust and live those answers in relationship with one another. Life is a school for learning to love. Death is a school for learning to live. /

Our searching for those answers is ultimately our searching for Christ. That searching is always there, but it becomes more acute in times of change: the death of a loved one, kids growing up and moving out, a new job, retirement, a debilitating illness, a move to a new town, a marriage or a divorce. In those moments we want something to hold on to, something to comfort, encourage, and reassure us. /

Sadness, fear, and desperation often cause us to grasp for something to anchor ourselves to. In some form or another. We seek to create a connection that already exists, maintain a presence that is already eternal, and hang on to a love that is already immortal. We do this not only with one another but also with Christ. Anchored, we forget or maybe even deny that our lives embody the shared and mutual love of Christ and one another. In that love is the fullness of presence; a presence, the disciples will learn, that transcends time, distance, and even death. / (2)

At some point though, we are better off letting our anchors go so that we can hear, experience, and live the deeper truth. Our lives, our actions, our love carry and reveal the presence of divine love. Jesus does not give us something, he says we are something. We are the gift. We are the connection. (pause) /

Listen to what he tells the disciples:

- I love you with the same love that the Father loves me. You have what I have.
- I give to you the joy that my Father and I share. You are a part of us.
- You are my joy, my life, and my purpose.
- I want your joy to be full, complete, whole, and perfect.
- You are my friends, my peers, my equals.
- I have told you everything. Nothing is held back or kept secret.
- I chose you. I picked you. I wanted you.
- I appointed, ordained, commissioned, and sent you to bear fruit, to love one another. I trust and believe you can do this. (pause)/ (3)

//// It's all about us in the best sense of those words. We are the love of Christ. Our belief in Jesus' words changes how we see ourselves, one another, the world, and the circumstances of our lives. That belief is what allows us to keep his commandment to love one another. When we know these things about ourselves our only response is love. We can do nothing else. We are free to live and to become the love of Christ more fully. /

The challenge of our search is not to find the answers but to believe and live them. Who are we? The love of Christ. What are the connections that will sustain our lives? The love of Christ. Where is my place in this world? The love of Christ. In, by, with, and through the love of Christ "all shall be well, all shall be well, every manner of thing shall be well." (Julian of Norwich) Thanks be to God. Amen. ////