Sixth Sunday of Easter  
May 5, 2024

QUESNEL

“Love Commanded, Love Connected” (John 15:9-17)

“*This is my commandment, that you love one another.”*

* So says the Lord Jesus today in the reading from John 15.
  + “But Jesus,” many might ask
    - as they have this silent struggle in their mind with Jesus
      * “Why this commandment?
        + How are we supposed to obey this one?
* And anyway
  + I thought you were only about the Gospel
    - And forgiving people
      * not about commanding people,
        + just forgiving them.

This sounds like Law to me,

and I thought you were

only about the Gospel!”

How is it that You can you command us to do this, Jesus,

* to “love one another”?
  + That is too hard.
    - I mean, there are some people I like to love.
      * I love my children;
        + I love my spouse.

Well, most of the time, at least.

* When they are being nice to me and sweet.
  + It is a little harder, though,
    - when they are being ornery
      * or getting on my nerves.

But there are lots of people

* I do not like to love, at any given time.
  + People who rub me the wrong way.
    - People I disagree with.
      * People who bore me
        + or are just not up to my standards.

People like old Joe.

I can not stand people like that.

And you want me to love them?

Seriously?

As we continue this imaginary discussion

* of a reluctant follower of our Lord,
  + we listen how this conversation endures.
    - The reluctant follower asks:

How can you command us to do this, Jesus,

* to love one another?
  + And it is not just about other people;
    - It is about me, too.
      * I mean, honestly,
        + when I look inside myself,

I do not always see a whole lot of love.

* Instead,
  + I see someone who is curved in on himself,
    - self-centered.
      * I like people,
        + I even love people,
        + especially if they at least strive

to make themselves lovable.

* This is sort of a self-interested kind of love,
  + if you can call such a thing “love.”
    - That is the problem, I guess.
      * I do not have enough love in me
        + to do what you are commanding me to do

Jesus.

PAUSE

Well, no, I do not use - the love I do have - properly,

* and I suspect you do not either.
  + Are there people you have trouble loving?
    - Are there people you love most of the time
      * but do not love some of the time?
        + Is the problem with their lovability

or with your own “love ability,”

that is, your ability to love?

Maybe both.

That is the problem with us, is it not?

* We do not love enough.
  + And that will always be the problem
    - as long as we look inside ourselves
      * for the source of love.
* If we look to ourselves for the resources
  + to do what Jesus commands,
    - we will not be able to do it.
      * With the approach,
        + of looking to self for the answer,

we will resort to watching out

for good old number one

but certainly we will not be able

to love one another.

So how can Jesus command us to do this?

* What is He thinking?
  + We can find out what He is thinking
    - by looking at the rest of this passage.
      * Because Jesus tells us what He means with
        + “This is my commandment,

that you love one another.”

You see, there is an all important piece we have left out so far.

* Listen to what Jesus adds
  + when He gives us this command.
    - He says,
      * “*This is my commandment,* 
        + *that you love one another as I have loved you.*

*“As I have loved you”!*

That is the key!

* This is the missing piece of the puzzle!
  + This is the all-important resource we need
    - in order to do what Jesus commands.
* “As I have loved you.”
  + There it is.
    - Jesus’ love for us.
      * Without that,
        + we will never be able to do

what Jesus commands,

to love one another.

First, Jesus has to love us.

And He has! Jesus has loved us.

* How do we know that?
  + Well, listen to what Jesus says:
    - *“Greater love has no one than this,* 
      * *that someone lays down his life for his friends.”*
        + And then look at what Jesus does:

He does exactly that:

He lays down His life for us!

* Surely this is the greatest love of all:
  + Not some self-love
    - or self-generated love
      * that I find within myself.
        + No, the greatest love of all

is the love that Christ Jesus demonstrated

when He laid down His life for us.

Think of that love!

* Was it because we were so loveable
  + that Christ did this?
    - No, not hardly.
      * “Christ died for the ungodly,”
        + Paul says in Romans.

Christ died for the unlovely

and the not very loveable.

* It is hard to fathom this love,
  + so pure and self-sacrificing it is.
    - The very Son of God came in the flesh,
      * as a man,
        + and loved a world of rebellious sinners.
* He loved those who would nail him to a cross.
  + He loved a band of fickle disciples
    - Who He knew,
      * would desert Him in His hour of need.
        + He loves a poor miserable sinner like me,

a poor excuse of a disciple,

who has failed His Lord

and His friends and family so many times.

* That Christ does this for the likes of us
  + this is love, my friends,
    - this is love.
      * If you look up “love” in the dictionary,
        + there ought to be a picture of Jesus next to it.

Jesus with His arms stretched out on the cross,

laying down His life for His friends.

Greater love hath no man than this.

How do we get this kind of love, with which to love others?

* We get it from Him.
  + Last week we heard the verses from John 15
    - leading into today’s text.
      * Our message was about the branches
        + abiding in the vine

and bearing fruit.

* And that is how it goes for us
  + being able to love one another:
    - by abiding in the vine.
      * Jesus even repeats it today.
        + “Abide in my love,” He says.

Just as life flows from Christ the vine

into us the branches,

so does love.

* Jesus is the source of both,
  + life and love.
    - For us to be able to do what Jesus commands,
      * to be able to love one another,
        + we need to abide in Christ the vine,

to abide in His love.

So this is how Jesus can expect us to love one other:

* because we are connected to Him,
  + and so we receive love from Him.
    - Love commanded, love connected.
      * What Jesus commands He also supplies.
* Therefore, it is not impossible for us to love one another.
  + We have the life and the love of Jesus
    - flowing through us.
      * We know what love is
        + because we ourselves have received love

from Christ.

Love commanded, love connected.

* Jesus says, “Love one another as I have loved you.”
  + And this connection goes back even further still.
    - Jesus says,
      * “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.”
        + The love connection flows

from the Father

to the Son to us,

and then out from us

to one another.

* The Father has loved Jesus.
  + Remember what the Father said of Christ
    - at both His baptism
      * and His transfiguration*?* 
        + *“This is my beloved Son,*

*in whom I am well pleased.”*

* The Father loved the Son
  + for taking on the mission of saving the world.
    - He loved Him for going to the cross
      * and laying down His life for sinners.
        + Love from the Father to the Son;

love from the Son to us;

and then love from me or you

to one another.

* This is the love connection.
  + This is how it *goes.*
    - This is how it flows.

So this is not something you even have the power to muster up on your own,

* this love that Jesus commands.
  + This is love you first receive
    - in order to have something to give.
      * The command to love does not occur in a vacuum.
* Rather, it comes to us who have received,
  + and we continue to receive,
    - life and love from the divine source,
      * the living vine,
        + Christ Jesus our Lord.

The connection happens as we abide in the vine,

as we abide in His love.

**Now** - do you see how Jesus can command this of us?

* It is because He gives us
  + what we need
    - to do ---
      * what He commands.
* We have all the love we need
  + when we receive it from Christ.
    - We know what love is.
      * And we know that we have an inexhaustible supply
        + with which to love our brothers and sisters.

That is who Jesus is talking about when He says, “Love one another.”

* He is talking about loving our fellow Christians.
  + He is even talking about loving these people
    - here around us in this church. Yes, including that person over there in the other pew that you may not like that much.
      * Loving your fellow Christians,
        + loving your fellow church members

this is Jesus’ special concern

here in this command.

* Not that we do not also love other people.
  + We do love.
    - But in this passage,
      * Jesus is calling special attention to loving one another
        + within the body of Christ,

both in this congregation

and in the church at large.

When my father was on his deathbed in the hospital,

* he admonished us one last time
  + to love one another.
    - We told him once again
      * that we didn’t think that would be a problem.
        + He smiled and said that probably not within our family

but with the church family also.

* We smiled indulgently,
  + but later I realized that meant
    - that he was reminding us to love
      * a couple of distinctly unlovable people.
        + **They are your brothers and sisters also.**

Here are your brothers and sisters, my friends.

* They are sitting here in the pews right along with you.
  + These are the people that Christ is commanding you to love.
    - Now, will you do what Jesus says?
      * This means forgiving the people
        + you have a grudge against.

It means getting to know the people

you usually try to avoid.

* It means being alert to their needs
  + and helping them in practical ways.
    - It means being alert to the temptation of Satan
      * to follow your path of how to love
        + rather than Christ’s,

It means giving of yourself to care for others.

* This is what love looks like.
  + And yes, you can do it.
    - Because you are connected to Christ.
      * You are abiding in His love.

Love commanded, love connected.

* Jesus commands us to love one another.
  + Connected to Him,
    - we have what it takes to do what He says.
      * Love commanded, love connected.
        + Christ Jesus has connected Himself to us,

and He has connected us to one another.

It happens in this community of love

called the church.

And now, as soon as this service ends,

* then the sermon will really begin.

AMEN

*This sermon was prepared for the Divine Service at Trinity Lutheran Church, Quesnel, BC and was presented on May 5, 2024 , the day we celebrated the 6th Sunday of Easter. If you have questions or comments please feel free to call or text Pastor Alan Visser at (250) 552-4685.*