

May 10, 2015 – John 15:9-17 (First: Acts 10:34-48 Epistle: 1 John 3:16-24)

Abide in the Love of Jesus

- *It produces joy*
- *It produces fruit*

At the beginning of our Gospel reading Jesus says: “*Abide in My love*” (v. 9). It seems like we just talked about love last week, and here it is again. Last week we looked at how we need the love of God because it provides the solution to our sin and is the source of our love. Here Jesus gives us two more reasons why it is important to abide in His love. His love produces joy and it produces fruit.

Jesus tells us of the joy that His love brings in verse 11: “*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*” But what are “*these things*” that Jesus has spoken to us so that His joy may remain in us?

In the first verse of this section Jesus said, “*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you...*” (v. 9). Consider that for a moment! How much does God the Father love His Son? On April 26 we considered John 10:11-18 where Jesus said, “*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;*” (John 10:14-15b ESV). Here again Jesus uses His relationship to the Father to illustrate His relationship with us – specifically His love for us. As the Father loved Jesus, so Jesus has loved us.

And what a great love that is! It is a love that led Jesus to lay down His life for us – to die in our place and save us from the punishment that our sins deserve. Not only that, it is a love that has adopted us, that we should be called the children of God! (1 John 3:1) You now have an inheritance of eternal life in heaven because Jesus died to pay for your sins. In this passage, Jesus puts it this way: He calls us His friends. We are His friends for whom He laid down His life. We, who were once God’s enemies because of our sin and disobedience, are now His friends, because Jesus died and rose again to take away the enmity between us and God.

The forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and friendship that Jesus brings through His death and resurrection are a cause for joy. But it isn’t just any joy that the love of Jesus brings, it is *His* joy. Jesus’ words here emphasize this. Jesus said, “*These things I have spoken to you, that the joy that is Mine may remain in you.*” It is the joy of the One “*who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” (Hebrews 12:2). It is a joy that comes from what Jesus has done for us to save us. A joy that can be full even when our situation here in this world isn’t very joyful. It is a joy that is based on a friendship that is not of this world.

As we look at some of the other things that Jesus says here, they may not seem to be very joy-producing. In verse 10 Jesus said, “*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.*” In verse 14 Jesus said, “*You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.*” It may seem here that Jesus’ love and friendship come with strings attached: we have to keep His commandments and do whatever He says.

Part of the problem is the word “commandment.” When you hear this word, what do you think of? Probably the Ten Commandments – a list of dos and don’ts – things we must do and things we shouldn’t do, or else. But Jesus did not come as “another Moses” to reiterate the old covenant law or to give us a new set of rules that we must follow. Rather, He came to fulfill the Law for us and to take away the condemnation we deserve under the Law because we have failed to keep it

perfectly. He took the condemnation of the law away, having nailed it to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

So to what does Jesus here refer? In verse 10 Jesus says that He has kept His Father's commandments and so abides in the Father's love. While it is true that Jesus kept all of God's commandments and lived a life of perfect obedience to God – something we have not done. And through faith His perfect life is considered our own. But that is not what Jesus refers to here. Back in chapter 10 Jesus said: *“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father”* (John 10:17-18). Jesus is referring here to the “commission” or “charge” He received from the Father to give His life for us all, and to take it up again by rising from the dead. These “commandments” from the Father are all the things that Jesus did for our salvation. How He willingly laid down His life for us out of love.

In the same way the “commandments” that Jesus gives us are centered in God's love for us. They focus on God's grace – His undeserved favor that we have through Jesus Christ. As our Epistle reading stated: *“His commandments are not burdensome”* (1 John 5:3). Perhaps a better word to use than “commandment” would be “precept.”

So what are these precepts of Jesus that we are to keep? In verse 9 Jesus said, *“Abide in My love.”* That is actually a command! *“Remain in My love! Stay in My love!”* Jesus wants you to continually experience His love for you. That is a joy and not a burden. Jesus goes on to say, *“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love”* (v. 10). When He says this, He is not setting up a condition, as if He said, *“Unless you keep my commandments, you won't abide in my love.”* No! Rather Jesus is pointing us to His precepts because they keep us in His love and grace, a place where we want to be – a place of joy.

Some examples will help us understand this. Jesus gives us one in v. 12: *“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”* We had this command last week when we looked at 1 John 4:7-21. And Jesus repeats it here at the end of our reading as well: *“These things I command you, that you love one another”* (v. 17). At times, this may not seem like an easy thing to do, especially when we consider the way that Jesus loved us, that it involved Him laying down His life for us. As He says here: *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends”* (v. 13). Laying down our lives for someone else may not be something that we always want to do!

Jesus' command to love one another does become burdensome when we look at someone and ask the question: *“Do they deserve my love?”* It becomes burdensome when think of what it will cost *us* instead of thinking of the other person. But this is why Jesus said: *“as I have loved you.”* He points us back to the great love He has for us. Jesus did not wait for us to deserve His love – we don't deserve it. He demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still sinners, He died for us (Romans 5:8). He also did not consider what He had to give up but looked to the joy of saving you and me and so endured the cross so that we can be called His friends. Because He so loved us, we can love one another, even if we aren't always easy to love. Jesus' command to love is not burdensome when we remember what Jesus did for us, even though we didn't deserve it. It is not burdensome when we consider how our love benefits the other person, and not what it costs us. And if we each keep this commandment, it will be easy to love one another because we are loving those who are loving us in the same self-sacrificing way.

In a few moments, you will be keeping another example of Jesus' commandments as you come forward to the Lord's Table. Jesus said, *“Take, eat; this is My body”* (Matthew 26:26) and *“Drink*

from it, all of you” and “*This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me*” (1 Corinthians 11:25). Right there we have four commandments: “take, eat, drink, do.” Are they burdensome? Did you wake up this morning and think, “Ahh, it’s Communion Sunday; I’m going to have to get up and go forward and take and eat Christ’s body and drink His blood. What a burden!”? Of course not. These commands are a perfect illustration of what Jesus is talking about here: His commands that keep us in His love – His precepts that graciously call us to believe on Him, to be His friends and to receive the love, forgiveness, and eternal life He has for us. These are things that we would want to do without Jesus’ commanding us because of the love Jesus has for us and the resulting love that we have for Him. These are things that bring us joy.

Jesus also tells us to abide in His love for second reason: so that we will bear fruit. Jesus said, “*I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain*” (v. 16). The love we have for one another is one of these fruits; it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit whom we have received from Jesus, as we talked about last week. These fruits come not from our selves, but from Jesus and the work He does in us through the Spirit. In the verses preceding this section in John 15 Jesus said: “*As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing*” (v. 4-5). That is true, without Jesus, we can do no good work. That is why we are to abide in Him and abide in His love.

The fruit that Jesus is talking about here, however, is more than just our love for one another. Do Jesus’ words: “*go and bear fruit*” remind you of anything else He said? At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said: “*Go and make disciples...*” (Matthew 28:19). The fruit that Jesus is talking about here is the fruit of the harvest – the fruit of sharing the good news of what Jesus has done for the world with those who do not yet know Him as their Friend and Savior.

We see this in verse 15, where Jesus says: “*No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*” Jesus did not save us so that we could be His servants blindly following His commands. Jesus shares His mission with us. He tells us what He has done and is doing and calls us to be involved with Him as His friends. He shares God’s word with us, so that we can share with others.

This also is not a burden, but a great joy. We have the privilege to work with God Himself and be involved with His mission. We may not feel up to the task, but that is why what Jesus says is so important: “*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain*” (v. 16). We did not take this work upon ourselves, but Jesus chose us and sends us for this work. That is a great comfort. Jesus knows what He is doing and knows whom He has chosen. Because He is behind our work, we can have confidence as we go out, and know He will bless our work. He is the one that appoints the fruit – fruit that will remain.

And He gives us a great promise in our mission. He chose and appointed us “*that whatever [we] ask the Father in [His] name He may give [us]*” (v. 16). Taken out of context, these words may sound like God is promising to give us whatever we want. But as we see here, Jesus gives this promise to His disciple as He appoints them to their outreach work with Him. God the Father promises to give us whatever we ask in Jesus’ name to help us in carrying out this joyous work of proclaiming to others the love which Jesus has for them.

We seek to guard and treasure the means of grace that Jesus has given us and to abide in His love. But we don’t do so only for our benefit. We are not to only serve ourselves with the good

news that Jesus took away the sins of the world, but to reach out to all those around us with His life-saving word. As Jesus involves us in His work, we are to have the same self-sacrificing love for those around us that He had for us when we were still sinners.

This type love is not one that we have by nature. It is not one that comes from ourselves. But you know where to find it: Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who laid down His life for us and made us His friends. It is His love that produces joy and produces fruit, so abide in His love. Amen.

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