

## Easter #6

5-7-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Vicar Karen Pugatch

### Celebrate (Introduction)

“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.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

### Opening Hymn: [“Morning Has Broken”](#)

#### Psalm: Psalm 98

“O sing to the Lord a new song,  
for he has done marvelous things!  
His right hand and his holy arm  
have gotten him victory.

<sup>2</sup>The Lord has made known his victory,  
he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.

<sup>3</sup>He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness  
to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen  
the victory of our God.

<sup>4</sup>Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;  
break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

<sup>5</sup>Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,  
with the lyre and the sound of melody!

<sup>6</sup>With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord!

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
the world and those who dwell in it!

<sup>8</sup>Let the floods clap their hands;  
let the hills sing for joy together

<sup>9</sup>before the Lord, for he comes  
to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness,  
and the peoples with equity.”

### Hymn of Praise: [“Beautiful Savior”](#)

## 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 Christy, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** [Acts 10:44-48](#)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** [1 John 5:1-6](#)

**The Gospel:** [John 15:9-17](#)

**Hymn of the Day:** [“Spirit of God Descend Upon My Heart”](#)

**The Message:** Vicar Karen Pugatch ([Video Link](#))

John 15:9-17

[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.”

On this the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter we abide in the farewell discourse. Jesus and his disciples are at dinner, he has washed their feet, announced the betrayal and denial and still implores them not to be troubled, promises another helper for them, and shares his peace.

These verses are a part of the conversation Jesus has with his friends to help prepare them for what is to come, it his goodbye to the people he loves. Jesus is offering comfort, teaching again about what keeping the great commandment to love each other looks like in practice- assuring them that they have what they need to carry on in his absence-in the next few days and when he ascends to the Father.

Today’s reading is really the second part of last week’s Gospel-Some preachers would recommend that we read the entire passage both weeks so in case you can’t recall- last week was the vine and branches. This week we hear that “abiding in the vine is abiding in Love.

I am not a huge fan of translating *menai* (meno) as abiding. Somehow for me it seems a bit too archaic, a word we never use, too passive. *Meno*, according to Strong's Lexicon to remain, abide

A. in reference to place

- to sojourn, tarry
- not to depart,
- to continue to be present
- to be held, kept, continually

B. in reference to time

- to continue to be, not to perish, to last, endure
- of persons, to survive, live

C. in reference to state or condition

- to remain as one, not to become another or different to wait for, await one

My favorite translation is that of my seminary professor Mark G.V. Hoffman who uses "stay connected" I like this interpretation because in my mind it implies relationship, and this is what Jesus is speaking about here in the "farewell discourse" Just as Jesus is in relationship with the Father so too, he is in relationship with the disciples which in turn connects them to the Father. There just happen to be many interesting connections in this passage! These connections happen in the Greek roots of several of the words used. I like how that root connection also connects to the metaphor of the vine.

Connection is something we have had to really work at this past year of pandemic isolation and now, as we begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel, connection is something we truly long for. Think of the joy of connecting with someone you have been physically separated from through the pandemic. Aren't the times of greatest joy those times of deepest connection to others? Joy has felt so out of reach this past year because connection to those we love has been so difficult. Jesus knows this will be true for his disciples, just as it is true for us. Maybe that is why I see connections everywhere I look in these texts! Here I find evidence of our boundary crossing God of connection reaching out with arms open and words of promise establishing connection with us through relationship with Jesus.

Of course, Jesus begins with the deepest connection of all-love. Agape, outward facing, selfless, sacrificial, unconditional, active love that builds up the community. This love, this connection with the Father through Jesus will bring them joy- complete joy even amid what is to come. Here is a connection you can't see unless you are a Greek scholar- Joy and Grace are from the same Greek root (*charis/chara*) the joy they experience in, with and through Jesus is the abundant grace of relationship with God. This is the love grounded in the incarnation, grounded in the command to love one another as we have been loved by Jesus. Love in action, in community in connection.

Jesus calls the disciples his friends, calls them to lay down their lives not for him, but for each other. In this time people participated in two kinds of friendship both inferred mutual obligation- a two-way

relationship. Here Jesus is not talking about “political friendship” the what have you done for me lately friendship of the patronage system – but what is called “fictive-kinship friendship which implies a willingness to defend one’s friend even to the point of laying down one’s life. Jesus is not just talking about dying, rather about living a life in the boundary crossing love found in being connected to the source of love. Jesus is speaking about setting aside those things that make us see others as different and asking us to welcome all into our circle of love.

Laying down one’s life was expected of true friends in the time of John’s gospel- what would it look like today if we were willing to lay aside those things that separate us and live into that love?

Friend in the Greek has connection to love- philos/phileo Friends might be better translated “those who are loved”; those on whom you can depend and this is important because so many followers in John’s time had been cast out of their own communities and families for following Jesus cut off from everyone they had known. The disciples left all that they had to follow- and Jesus knows that soon he will not be physically with them and they will need to rely on one another.

Jesus assures them that they have been chosen and appointed so they can bear good fruit. Appointed and laying down one’s life are also connected in the Greek they come from the same root- to put, place, fix, set, or establish. So many connections in this text!

One must be connected to the source to be able to bear good fruit. Jesus has shared all the Father has told him with these friends, and with us!-they have all that they need, they are connected to each other and through Jesus to God. We are connected in the very same way; we are all members of the body of Christ.

This language of being chosen is not, as Johannine scholar Karoline Lewis points out, a deep theological statement. In this time and place, as a part of this conversation these are words of promise and comfort-spoken to the disciples and to us assuring us that no matter what -we are important, chosen, loved. Jesus has chosen us-made a commitment to us and will remain connected to us-even unto death. All we need do is follow the commandment to love each other as we are loved by Jesus!

But therein lies the rub! This kind of love is difficult. All too often we fall victim to our own ideas about who is worthy of our love. We want to choose who to love based on the boundaries we have erected in our lives-love can be a dangerous thing. Can love really be the result of a command? Maybe we should translate this not as command but rather as directions, teachings or guidelines. Jesus has shown us what it means to live a life of love and we are to follow his example. This has been so difficult this past season and so many of us are tired, feeling disconnected from each other maybe even cut off from the source of love and the great joy that it brings. We have experienced so much loss and have been unable to intercede in concrete and active ways- we feel cut off from the world. Jesus reminds us that we are never cut off from the source that sustains us- even in the darkest times, reminds us that he desires us to experience the complete joy that being connected to him provides.

Jesus is the way and the gate and the shepherd that leads us, Jesus is the vine, we have been pruned so that our connection will produce fruit. We can never fully live up to the example Jesus has set for us- but we can stay connected to Jesus abiding in love. In our connection to Jesus, we are connected to the

never-failing love of the Father. Through our connection to one another we are called to share that love. It's all about love-agape-embodied love in action not just for those closest to ourselves but for our neighbors around the globe. We are after all the branches that bear fruit! Connected to the true vine that is the source of life and love; rooted in the rich soil of the creator's never failing Agape.

**Anthem:** ["God So Loved the World" The St. Paul's Cathedral Choir](#)

**Offering\*:** ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

### **The Prayer**

Loving Father of all, we give you thanks for the greatest gift which we could ever receive – the gift of the example of love. The songwriter had it right that "Love is What Makes the World Go Round." It is love which gives purpose and meaning to life and it is your love, given through Jesus, which is the example of the perfection of love. Continually fill our hearts and lives with this love so that we may in turn live this example to the world in which we live. This morning we are especially thankful for the love which mothers live for their children which so very often is sacrificial. It is this love which will bring meaning to this troubled world.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family,, Della , Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack,  
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **The Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make His face shine upon you;  
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters  
Live on knowing God's love,  
The joy of living this life of love,  
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.  
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

**Closing Hymn:** ["Blest Be the Tie that Binds"](#)

**Announcements**

Avery blessed and Happy Mother's Day

Many thanks goes to Ron Lambert for making the needed repairs to the Neumann Chapel Altar –well done.

In person worship services have begun, 9:30am. Services will be outdoors unless inclement weather conditions which then we will be indoors. Face masks and social distancing both indoors and outdoors will be required. An email will be sent late Saturday afternoons stating whether indoors or outdoors.

\*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill  
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road  
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church  
9122 Sybert Drive  
Columbia Hills  
Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: [https://tithe.ly/give\\_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291](https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291)