

# “THAT’S What Love’s Got to Do With It!”

John 15:9-17

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Eastertide

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## **John 15:9-17 (NRSV)**

<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<sup>[a]</sup> any longer, because the servant<sup>[b]</sup> 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.

The 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of John is near and dear to my heart; to my ministry really. Specifically, a verse from last week’s reading became my “life verse” when I was confirmed. *“I am the vine, (Jesus said) you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”*

Do you notice that I use the phrase “*continue to abide in Him*” motivation at the end of my emails to you?

Abiding, in John’s gospel, is a concept of intimacy and connection.

That’s where we “get” the VINE idea – of staying connected FOR life.

John uses ABIDING as a metaphor that most closely describes that interdependence of love between Jesus and his disciples; between Jesus and US!

This chapter of John’s gospel is filled with love.

John wrote “love” (he writes it NINE TIMES in just today’s verses) as both a noun and a verb....a *thing* **and** an *action*.

These verses are part of Jesus’ “farewell discourse.”

He’s getting ready to leave them. He needs them to grasp this!

Like Moses reiterated God’s laws to the Israelites before handing over the leadership of the people to Joshua, Jesus wants his personally chosen disciples to

be sure and understand what HE'S been about...what THEY WILL BE ABOUT ...and the impact THEIR ministries will have in the world. They need to understand before he hands the reins over to them.

I don't think, truly, that we can MISS the theme of this chapter.

And what's pretty powerful to me is that it's both beautiful and heartbreaking.

Jesus really lays it all out; he bares his heart to his friends, the disciples.

*"I CHOSE you," he tells them, "you didn't choose me."*

And, he says again (and again,) *"I have loved you."*

But what we should recognize, clearly, is that Jesus wants US ALL to know that the relationship he has with us (his disciples) is not just two-sided (us and him.)

The headwaters of **all** this love is God the Father.

*"As the Father has loved me," Jesus says, "so I have loved you."*

Umph! If we *really* hear those words, *REALLY TAKE THOSE WORDS IN*, they should move us to bring glory to God in all we do!

And then, Jesus uses that metaphor: *abide in my love*.

Stay in it.

Remain within it.

LIVE IN my love.

Unlike our English translation abide (meaning "stand for" or "tolerate") Jesus' words have a continuing connotation.

This isn't a short-lived experience, but for life.

*"Abide in my love."*

And something as powerful as THAT doesn't happen in isolation.

It's not "just" an act of the will.

There's a closely related requirement that Jesus makes into a condition for love.

*"If you keep my commandments, **you will** abide in my love."*

See THAT'S what love has to do with it!

Without keeping God's commandments, we can't have love and we can't remain in love either.

The verses of Scripture called the "Song of Moses" (in Deuteronomy) reminds the Israelites that God's commandments are the source of life; abundant life.

But, obedience is something our culture rejects.

It isn't admired.

Too many "of the world" people think that obedience is for the weak.

Jesus knew what we were going to encounter about the subject of obedience.

So he sets himself - right in front - of us as an example.

His life was one of total obedience to the Father.

And even a worldly atheist, if they've heard about Jesus, couldn't call HIM weak.

Jesus obeyed.

His ABIDING, that constant connection with his father through prayer, and that loving relationship sustained him through abandonment and on the cross.

Jesus remained in obedience to the will of the Father, because he knew that, despite everything, the Father loved him.

Those of you who were able to gather on Maundy Thursday over at Trinity, can you remind the rest of us: What's the commandment that we're to obey in order to abide in the love of Christ? Do you recall?

Our direction is FROM Jesus and THROUGH him to others: **to love one another.**

Rituals and sacrifices and adherence to the tiny details of laws are nothing!

What matters, Jesus instructs, is how we treat one another.

John's First Epistle testifies to this too.

*"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments."*

Corrie ten Boom once said, "If you don't like your lot in life, *put up a service station.*"

Love!

And be in service to one another!

But wait: THERE'S MORE!

Obedience to God's commandments bears fruit.

The vine imagery we heard about last Sunday is something that the disciples knew as a metaphor that came to them from faithful people, the Israelites, before them.

When Paul writes his letter to the Galatians he's going to list the fruits of the Spirit (in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter; we're going to touch on them again in a few weeks.) And the first fruit, of abiding in LOVE, is that we have JOY!

Wouldn't you agree that THERE IS JOY in knowing we are loved by God in Christ; and nothing can separate us from the love of God?

//I want to go back to another phrase in today's reading; we can't leave it out there.

When Jesus says "I chose you, you didn't choose me" he also encourages them that the circle DOES grow...that they are connected to the Father, too.

*Jesus said, "I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant doesn't know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends."*

Jesus has called them friends, because he'd made known to them everything he'd heard from his Father."

That's where the circle grows.

Commentators tell us that, too often, this passage's use of the word "servant" (comes from the Greek "doulos") is incorrectly used as a term of shame.

But, the "servitude" **was more**, in Jesus' meaning. It's a title of honor!

Moses was the "doulos" of God, the servant of God.

So was Joshua.

So was David.

So are the saints of faith who have gone before us, teaching, like Jesus, to be "slaves" **in service** to God.

And then, Jesus takes it one step further.

No longer "just" slaves in service to God, they are also **friends**.

So were Moses and David and the others, friends of God because God had revealed Himself to them (maybe not physically, but with faithful understanding.)

*Jesus says, "I have something greater for you than this, you are no longer to be called slaves, but rather I call you my friends."*

He's spent his ministry demonstrating and teaching what God, through Jesus, needs them to know.

Jesus offered an intimacy that not only connected Jesus with the Father (and be clear that the Holy Spirit is present, through implication, too,) and that intimacy includes US!

**WE'RE IN THE CIRCLE!**

It's a *COMPLETE* circle of love that originates with God, is shown to us by Christ, and our indwelling Spirit, is the firing piston that encourages us to keep the Commandments and to love.

FRIENDS, chosen people, Family of Faith, these verses, that focus on love and obedience to God's commandments, aren't just for the disciples and Jesus' close friends.

They're for us, too.

Jesus chose US, too.

To love – because God loved us first.

To love – all people, not for who they are or what they could do in return, but because of who *YOU* are.

To love – and bear fruit in your witnessing of how much GOD LOVES us; that THAT love is the source of our abundant lives – not only in the bearing; but in sharing in the harvest as others come to know that LOVE as well.

Praise God who loves us! Amen!