

Note: this sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. Steven P. Mueller, the assisting pastor at Saint Paul's Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA on Sunday, May 13th, 2012

Abiding in His Love
(John 15:9-17)

Introduction: Everyone needs love – but do they get it?

- A. Our world talks about love but by reducing it merely to a feeling, they miss out on real love.
- B. On Mothers' Day we give thanks for the love of our mothers, but recognize that some have conflicted feelings
- C. Many people spend their lives looking for people or things that will make them feel loved but they often fail to find what they seek.

I. Jesus teaches us what love really is and proves that we really are loved

- A. Many people bring that same misunderstanding of love to religion. This can lead to disappointment because they are looking for the wrong thing.
- B. Jesus tells us we are loved and shows us the depth of that love. John 15:9 says "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love."
- C. This love is not a merely word but an all-encompassing commitment. Jesus shows us this love in John 15:16 "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."
- D. Lest we misunderstand, He calls us His friends. He demonstrates the depth of His love by sacrificing Himself for us. St. Paul writes about this in Romans 5:6-10

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

- E. That's how we are loved – He loves us to death. We cannot earn His love. We cannot make Him love us and we cannot make Him stop loving us. As we did not choose for our mothers to birth us, we did not choose for God to give us life, love us and redeem us. So Jesus says in John 15:16, "You did not choose me, but I chose you..."
- F. Some people may object that is one sided – and they are right. He has done it all for us. So if you want to know whether you are loved, look at what He has done. Look to the cross where He paid the price. Look to the font where He adopted you. Come to the table where He feeds you today with His true body and blood. He's done it all. You are loved.

II. Jesus teaches us how to react to this love – by abiding in it

- A. Thinking of marriage as a 50-50 relationship is a recipe for divorce. We should give of all of ourselves and hold nothing back.
- B. What's the percentage in our relationship with God? He certainly gives 100% and asks nothing in return. But He does ask something from us. Jesus tells us to do two things in our Gospel today. Look again at what Jesus says first in John 15:9

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. “

- C. We can misunderstand it by making a grammatical mistake. The verb is an imperative – Jesus is telling us to do something. So what's the verb? Most people read it as “love” as in “You must love.” That's meant well, but it misses the point. The verb in Jesus' sentence is “abide.” Understanding that makes all the difference. Here Jesus isn't commanding us to love – he's commanding us to stay where we are. To stay in His love. To live in the state of being loved. Let God be God. Let Him love you. That's what He tells us. Let Me love you. Stay in My love.
- D. That is faithfulness. That is what it means to belong to Jesus. Let Him love you.

III. When we abide in God's love, we become His instruments in sharing His love with others

- A. Loving others is important, but that is a response of faith. We must be loved before we can love. Only after we abide in love does the second of Jesus' commands become possible and make any sense. In verse 12 he says “love one another as I have loved you.”
- B. Living in God's love, we can experience a wonderful dimension of God's love. God works among us through means in Word and Sacrament.
- C. As we abide in His love, we see that one of the ways that God loves and cares for His people is through us. We are, as Luther called us, “masks of God.” We serve our neighbor in our vocations. We reflect His love to them.
- D. We, who Jesus calls friends instead of servants, now live in His love and reflect that love to other people